

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY: AN INVESTIGATION OF RELIGIOUS  
AND MORAL VALUES EXPRESSED IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

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## ABSTRACT

The study investigates children's religious and moral reasoning in relation to situations in literature. Theoretical examination includes evaluation of both psychological and literary perspectives on morality and religion. Chapter 1 outlines and evaluates the cognitive-developmental approach to moral development as developed by Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg. The validity of stage categorization is questioned and it is suggested that consideration of types of moral reasoning contributes more than the idea of fixed moral stages to the understanding of moral thought processes. Chapter 2 outlines a literary perspective on religion and examines the emphasis in orientation towards religion as expressed by fantasy and moralistic literature. Although literature has not been categorically designated "moralistic literature", passages which contain moralistic emphasis are isolated for discussion. Evaluation of the discipline of reader response theory integrates the theoretical and practical aspects of the study.

In Chapters 3 and 4 the responses of children in two age groups (6- to 8-year-olds and 11- to 13-year-olds) to selected stories are analysed. Thirty-six and twenty-five children's responses were selected respectively for analysis. The younger children were interviewed in pairs after a story had been read to them, whereas the older children read stories that were given to them and answered an open-ended questionnaire before the interviews were conducted. There was no fixed schedule of questions used during the interviews as questions were generally framed in response to the children's responses, but the children were

encouraged to think evaluatively (e.g. "Why do you think the queen did that?") and empathically (e.g. "How do you think you would've felt in that position?").

Responses displayed a variety of reasoning in both groups, ranging from egocentric reasoning to fairly advanced understanding of concepts like forgiveness and sacrifice.

Chapter 5 outlines conclusions and implications for future research. Contrary to the expectation that children would react in a negative way to moralistic or overtly religious literature, the respondents tended to ignore rather than reject certain emphases, but when ignoring such passages did not condemn the story as a whole. An expectation which was confirmed was that fantasy literature in which values are subtly expressed has greater potential for stimulating moral reasoning than overtly moralistic literature, because the latter tends to confine rather than extend moral thinking. Generally adult psychologists and literary critics tend to attribute greater influence to children's literature than that which is evident from these children's responses.

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## INTRODUCTION

This study was begun with the intention of investigating the various ways in which religious and moral values are expressed in children's literature and how these values are experienced by children. The investigation is not confined to overtly "religious" books for children, but examines the treatment of religious concepts in a wider context with particular emphasis on the treatment of good and evil.

As much of the literature relating to children's literature is written from an adult orientation it was decided to include analysis of children's responses to selected stories in order to test adult perceptions of how children are envisaged to respond to literature against children's actual responses. What this study aims to investigate is the immediate response of children to a story and the possible effect the story may have in terms of stimulating moral or religious thinking. Moral development is therefore discussed in detail with particular reference to the theories of moral development of Piaget and Kohlberg. Different types of moral reasoning and factors affecting people's perception of morality are examined in order to provide a general perspective on moral development.

Although criticism of the literary standard of selected stories is kept to a minimum (and is included only when the moral content is thought to affect literary worth), a literary approach to the interrelationship of literature and religion is outlined. The study examines the relationship between moral purpose and its integration in the literary work and therefore a distinction is made between literature in which the moral or religious values

emerge naturally from the work and literature in which these values are expressed in a strongly didactic way.

A model of literary understanding, which interrelates the components of writer, text, audience and reader, introduces the concept of reader response theory and provides a link between the theoretical and the practical aspects of the study.

Analysis of the selected stories includes examination of the range of concepts to which the child is exposed in each story. Good and evil are the central concepts examined, but related concepts (e.g. love, forgiveness, betrayal) and moral attitudes (towards theft, for example) are considered as well. The extent to which the concepts are explored depends on the way in which they are expressed in the story and on the level of understanding of each child. As the concepts and moral values are essentially adult-determined, it is not suggested that the readers will be aware of every value or that they need to be aware of the values in order to appreciate the story.

#### Brief outline of methodology

I have selected two age groups for investigation, 6- to 8-year-olds and 11- to 13-year-olds. This study is restricted to these two age groups as children at these ages should have reached particularly interesting points of development which should result in a wide cross-section of moral thought processes.

Because of restrictions placed on research conducted at Cape Education Department schools ("Questions to responders on contentious matters such as, inter alia, parents,

the parental home, religious denomination, and morals

are normally not allowed." <sup>1</sup> ), my respondents were primarily private school scholars. Obviously no attempt at a random sample could be made, but as the study is of the investigative case study type this was not considered a problem. The private school population provided an interesting study group in that it was multi-racial and respondents could generally be assumed to be products of upper socio-economic backgrounds. Therefore, although not all respondents attended private schools (some were interviewed independently of schools), the respondents in this study are representatives of these age groups, but they cannot be considered to be generally representative of all South African children.

It must be stressed that this is not an empirical study and therefore no attempt has been made to introduce experimental procedures. For the same reasons as Kohlberg, who in spite of extensive knowledge of orthodox experimental techniques has <sup>2</sup> chosen to reject them as inappropriate, I have elected to use a non-empirical approach. Interpretation of responses made during in-depth interviews refers to the validity of individual response, and the variety of responses obtained from the small number of respondents indicates that attempts to draw statistical conclusions would be meaningless and would detract from the value of the study.

Procedure: ages 6 to 8

Six stories were read to groups of children of this age group and a total of 36 children's responses were selected for analysis.

Interviews were conducted in pairs. Before each interview began it was made clear to the children that there were no right or wrong answers to the questions as their own opinions were important. They were encouraged not to echo each other's viewpoints, but to think carefully and express their own ideas. The interview schedule was loosely structured and although certain standard questions were asked during the course of the interview, most questions were framed in response to the children's responses.

#### Procedure: ages 11 to 13

Nine stories were selected for this age group. Children were requested to read the books on their own before answering a questionnaire. They were told that they would have the opportunity of expressing their opinions about the books, and were urged to finish reading their allocated books even if they disliked the stories. The questionnaire comprised two parts, a general question section (which could be applied to every book) and a section of specific questions relating to situations in each book. (See Appendix.) The questionnaires have been structured in an open-ended manner in order to allow as much variety in response as possible. Questions which are overtly religious in nature or which stress the good/evil dichotomy have not been included as I have tried specifically to guard against the possibility of respondents' discovering that I am investigating moral and religious reasoning. After completion of the questionnaires, follow-up interviews were conducted in which the responses given in the questionnaires were used to stimulate discussion on moral issues. Again, it was stressed that the

children's own opinions were important, and care was taken to avoid questions which might suggest to the children that a certain response was expected by the interviewer, and which might therefore have prompted them to respond accordingly instead of expressing their own opinions.

It must be stressed that no attempt was made to use the stories to teach the children morality as the study is essentially investigative and not didactic. The aim is to discover to what extent certain types of literature can stimulate the children to evaluate their existing values and to assess the children's recognition of these values at different levels. Practical implications of the study are outlined in the conclusion.

## CHAPTER 1. MORAL DEVELOPMENT

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

In this section the idea of moral development is investigated, the aim being to examine a broad spectrum of moral reasoning which will provide a background against which children's responses to moral issues can be understood. The study concentrates primarily on the cognitive-developmental approach to moral development (the emphasis being on the models of Piaget and Kohlberg) as this approach appears to be most suited to the nature of my research. In the presentation of appropriate literature for assessment it is essential to take into consideration the cognitive ability of the children at certain stages as they will need to understand the situations in the literature in order to respond to them adequately.

Although the cognitive-developmental approach deals with specific stages of moral development, it is not my intention to categorize children as definitively belonging to a particular stage nor will any attempt be made to establish a fixed correlation between age and moral stage. As this is not an empirical in-depth study of moral development, stage categorization as understood in Kohlbergian terms is not essential. The moral stage sequences outlined by Piaget and Kohlberg are discussed not for the purpose of enabling categorization of a child to a particular stage but in order to equip the reader/researcher with a working framework of moral development. There is a vast distinction between (a) stating categorically that because of a certain response Child A



is at Stage X in the process of moral development and (b) stating that a certain response is an indication that Child A is using reasoning characteristic of Stage X at a particular moment. The second approach uses the moral framework to assess the child's response without insistence on rigid categorization.

The study is limited to the investigation of two age groups (6- to 8-year-olds and 11- to 13-year-olds) as time and space do not permit a larger study group. Although the likelihood exists that children in a certain age-group will exhibit moral reasoning characteristic of a particular moral stage, the purpose of the study is to discover the diversity of moral reasoning which can be elicited from their comprehension of situations in literature. As the process of development is essentially personal and affected by individual growth, different children will develop at different rates which makes age categorization irrelevant.

The examination of moral stages promotes awareness and understanding of the range of moral reasoning which children may display and for the purposes of this research a broad orientation is more essential than accurate categorization, especially as research has shown that Kohlberg's rigid categorization is problematic (as discussed below). Because of my awareness of the limitations of the theories of Piaget and Kohlberg, it is not my intention to test the theories in this study, but to use their insight to provide a broad orientation from which the idea of the integration of moral types will be developed.

## 1.2 PIAGET'S THEORY OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT

Jean Piaget based his theory of moral development, which he

1

expounded in The Moral Judgement of the Child,<sup>1</sup> on a series of interviews conducted with children, covering various topics ranging from a detailed investigation of the rules of a game of marbles to questions on degrees of "naughtiness" in stories testing children's assessment of good and bad behaviour. Piaget's was the first approach to moral development to suggest a direct link with cognitive development and to include the idea of qualitatively different stages through which the child must pass in order to gain moral maturity. He believes that moral development is dependent on two factors: (i) cognitive development; and (ii) social relationships. Wright and Croxen in their assessment of the cognitive approach to moral development summarize this view as follows:

He asserts that in simultaneously acting upon the environment and being acted upon by it, the child actively constructs his knowledge of the world. Acting upon the world is knowing it; knowing the world is acting upon it. Thus in the realm of morality the child neither passively receives his moral rules and ideas from others nor has any inborn moral sense. Rather he progressively constructs his controlling moral ideas through interaction with others.<sup>2</sup>

Piaget regards change (in both cognitive and moral development) as a process of adaptation which occurs by means of two inter-related processes, assimilation and accommodation. Assimilation is the process whereby new ideas or experiences are added to existing experience, and accommodation is the process which creates the changes in understanding necessary for the interpretation of the new experience. Applebee explains the processes by means of the following example:

Consider children ... hearing a fairy tale. They will assimilate the story to their past experience of similar tales, providing themselves with expectations about

such things as types of characters, patterns of behavior and suitable endings. On the other hand, their understanding of "fairy tales" will be somewhat altered and expanded by the new characters and actions which they meet in the particular tale; these changes are what Piaget means by accommodation. 3

Piaget understands the change from one stage to another to occur in a similar manner. The processes of assimilation and accommodation interact simultaneously until sufficient information has been integrated for reasoning to operate at the next stage. [Stage transition will be discussed in greater detail when moral stages are outlined.]

#### 1.2.1 Cognitive stages

Before the moral stages are discussed a brief outline of Piaget's cognitive stages is useful. The four stages of cognitive development are: (i) the period of sensory-motor intelligence; (ii) the period of preoperational thought; (iii) the period of concrete operations; and (iv) the period of formal operations. (The first stage need not concern us as it refers to cognitive development from birth to the age of 2 years.) Preoperational thought is predominantly egocentric as children at this stage are unaware that others may draw conclusions different to their own. Concrete operational thinking is present once the child is able to understand what Piaget calls concrete operations e.g. centration (the ability to consider more than one aspect of a problem), transformation (co-ordination of successive steps in a sequence) and reversibility (the ability to make inversions and deductions). During the last stage, formal operations, the child extends logical thinking to include hypothesis building and solving problems by more sophisticated methods.

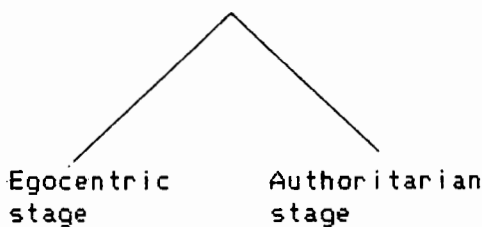
Piaget's understanding of the dependence of moral reasoning on these cognitive stages is implicit - he does not attempt to link the stages in a formal manner, but it is clear from the way he describes moral development that there is a relationship between them. His description of the development of autonomous moral reasoning (discussed below) for example, implies that concrete operational thinking is a prerequisite for its development.

### 1.2.2 Moral stages

He isolates four stages of moral development largely based on the original stages of development which he identified in the children's understanding of the rules of the game of marbles.

He also makes a distinction between two types of morality evident in the development of moral reasoning - heteronomous and autonomous morality.

Morality of adult constraint  
and moral realism (heteronomous  
morality)



Morality of co-operation  
and reciprocity (autonomous  
morality)

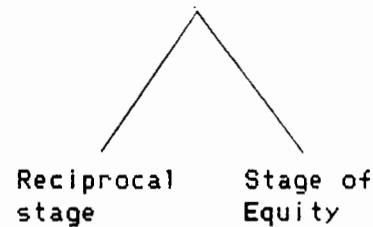


Figure 1. Piaget's moral stages

Figure 1 indicates the division of Piaget's four moral stages into the two types of morality. Each stage can be briefly explained by means of examples. Children in the egocentric stage relate all actions only to themselves. Piaget describes egocentrism as "a form of behaviour intermediate between purely

individual and socialized behaviour"<sup>5</sup> and explains that a child who is learning to play marbles does not consider other players or winning as important:

But though he imitates what he observes, and believes in perfect good faith that he is playing like the others, the child thinks of nothing at first but of utilizing these new acquisitions for himself. He plays in an individualistic manner with material that is social. Such is egocentrism.<sup>6</sup>

In the authoritarian stage children have come to recognize the importance of submission to external authority. Kay, who discusses a variety of moral development theories in his work Moral Development, summarizes the essence of this stage as follows: "The right thing to do is to obey the order of an adult. The wrong thing to do is to assert one's own will."<sup>7</sup> Punishment appears to be a determining factor in distinguishing right from wrong. Piaget relates that the reason given by children at this stage for not telling lies is that they are punished for lying. When asked whether it would still be naughty to tell lies if they were not punished, children answer, "No".<sup>8</sup>

In the reciprocal stage there is a transition from the idea of rules or morality as being absolute to that of behaviour being governed by laws decided by mutual consent. Justice becomes an important concept which Piaget studies principally by assessing children's reactions to the fairness of various punishments. Expiatory punishment (in which "there is no relation between the content of the guilty act and the nature of its punishment") is contrasted with punishments by reciprocity (in which misdeed and punishment are "related both in content and nature, not to speak of the proportion kept between the gravity of the one and the

9  
 rigour of the other"). Children at this stage of moral reasoning have moved away from the idea that the fairest punishment is the one that is most severe to an understanding of the appropriateness of the punishment's fitting the crime. Piaget finds a high incidence of what he calls "sheer reciprocity"<sup>10</sup> (e.g. a child who has knocked over a pot of flowers should have his toys broken) as opposed to restitutive punishment (the child has to replace the object) which is more prevalent during the next stage.

Finally, in the stage of equity there is not only recognition of the viewpoints of others in general terms but a need for each individual to be treated fairly. Kay's assessment of this stage includes emphasis that reciprocity is still important but the difference is that "whereas previously reciprocity was demanded by an external law it is now acknowledged as an internal moral imperative."<sup>11</sup> From responses to questions on lying Piaget concludes that "truthfulness gradually ceases to be a duty imposed by heteronomy and becomes an object envisaged as good by an autonomous personal conscience."<sup>12</sup> Two responses to the question why one should not lie illustrate this point. "Because if everyone lies no one would know where they were" and "Because you can't trust people any more."<sup>13</sup> Although Piaget identifies different stages, he does so within the general context of the work, without specifically enumerating different sequential stages, so that for purposes of analysis they need to be abstracted from the work as a whole. He does not collate or tabulate the stages nor does he spell out the mechanics of moral stage transition. It is assumed by researchers that moral stages develop similarly to his cognitive stages - by the

processes of assimilation and accommodation outlined above. Although there are implicit breaks between the stages, Piaget does not regard the stages as mutually exclusive. A child is considered to be at the egocentric stage if the majority of his moral decisions indicate egocentric reasoning although he may have already assimilated and accommodated aspects of reasoning from a different stage. It appears that stage transition does not occur by sudden jumps but by gradual sequential integration and reorientation of new experiences which contribute to a more sophisticated type of reasoning. In the transition from heteronomy to autonomy Piaget suggests that there is an intermediate phase during which the internalization and generalization of rules and commands occurs as there is not only a movement towards more advanced moral reasoning, but a change in the kind of moral reasoning as well. He illustrates this with reference to their research discoveries on lying:

Then comes an intermediate stage, which M. Bovet has noted with great subtlety; the child no longer merely obeys the commands given him by the adult but obeys the rule itself, generalized and applied in an original way. We have observed this phenomenon in connection with lying. At a given moment the child thinks that lies are bad in themselves and that, even if they were not punished, one ought not to lie. Here, undoubtedly, is a manifestation of intelligence working on moral rules as on all other data by generalizing them and differentiating between them. But the autonomy towards which we are moving is still only half present: there is always a rule that is imposed from outside and does not appear as the necessary product of the mind itself.

How does the child attain to autonomy proper? We see the first signs of it when he discovers that truthfulness is necessary to the relations of sympathy and mutual respect. Reciprocity seems in this connection to be the determining factor of autonomy. For moral autonomy appears when the mind regards as necessary an ideal that is independent of all external pressure. 14

### 1.3 KOHLBERG'S THEORY OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT

Lawrence Kohlberg has adapted and expanded the work of Piaget in his contribution to the extension of the cognitive-developmental approach to moral development. He has formulated a more complex model of moral developmental stages which is being tested and reviewed continually in long-term research studies. Like Piaget, he is more interested in investigating moral reasoning than moral behaviour and the following statement indicates his perception that moral behaviour does not necessarily imply the operation of a high stage of moral reasoning: "Contrary to what we usually think, it is quite easy to teach conventionally virtuous behavior but very difficult to teach true 'Knowledge of the good'." As Kohlberg's intention is to propagate moral education, much of the emphasis in his research is devoted to investigating how moral development can be stimulated. He explains the dynamics of his moral developmental theory by stating that people will move to a higher moral stage when they become dissatisfied with their present "Knowledge of the good", and therefore the moral educator should adopt a Socratic role in creating dissatisfaction with moral knowledge at lower stages.

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A brief description of Kohlberg's moral stages is necessary for more extensive discussion. He developed a six-stage system which operates within a three-level structure. The three levels are the preconventional level, the conventional level and the postconventional and principled level. Piaget and Kohlberg's stages are outlined in Table 1.

The preconventional level comprises Stages 1 and 2. Stage 1 is the stage of punishment and obedience, in which doing right means



obedience to authority, the prime motivation for obedience being avoidance of punishment. Stage 2 is the stage of individual instrumental purpose and exchange. "Right is serving one's own or others' needs and making fair deals in terms of concrete exchange." A person at this stage is guided by personal satisfaction but is aware that others have conflicting interests. Wright and Croxen describe this stage as "naive egalitarianism and orientation to exchange and reciprocity."<sup>17</sup>

Table 1. Outline of the moral stages of Piaget and Kohlberg.

PIAGET	KOHLBERG
<u>Heteronomous Morality</u>	<u>Preconventional Level</u>
Egocentric	Punishment and obedience
Authoritarian	Individual instrumental purpose and exchange
<u>Autonomous Morality</u>	<u>Conventional Level</u>
Reciprocal	Mutual interpersonal expectations, relationships and conformity
Equity	Social system and conscience maintenance
	<u>Postconventional &amp; Principled Level</u>
	Prior rights and social contract or utility
	Universal ethical principles

The conventional level comprises Stage 3, the stage of mutual interpersonal expectations, relationships and conformity; and Stage 4, the stage of social system and conscience maintenance. At Stage 3 (also described as the "good boy - nice girl" stage) living up to others' expectations and gaining their approval for "being good" are important. "Reasons for doing right are needing to be good in one's own eyes and those of others, caring for others, and because if one puts oneself in the other person's place one would want good behavior from the self (Golden Rule)." At Stage 4 the person's moral actions are motivated by a sense of

duty towards society and the need to maintain social order. "This stage differentiates societal point of view from interpersonal agreement or motives. A person at this stage takes the viewpoint of the system, which defines roles and rules. He or she considers individual relations in terms of place in the system."

The postconventional and principled level comprises Stages 5 and 6. At Stage 5, the stage of prior rights and social contract or utility, doing right is "upholding the basic rights, values, and legal contracts of a society, even when they conflict with the concrete rules and laws of the group." At this stage the person is aware of the conflicting moral and legal points of view and finds it difficult to integrate them. Stage 6 is the stage of universal ethical principles in which moral judgement is guided by universal ethical principles over and above legal considerations. "When laws violate these principles, one acts in accordance with the principle."

To his original six stages he has added two more, Stage 0, the most basic stage in which the good is conceived of as "what I want and like" and Stage 4 1/2, a transitional stage which bridges the gap between the conventional and postconventional levels. "At Stage 4 1/2, choice is personal and subjective. It is based on emotions, conscience is seen as arbitrary and relative as are ideas such as 'duty' and 'morally right'."

Unlike Piaget's stages (which trace development to the age of about 12 years when he believed the child to be capable of autonomous reasoning), Kohlberg's stages extend to adult moral development, but he does not claim that all adults will reach a Stage 6 level of moral reasoning. On the contrary he believes

that most adults do not proceed further than Stage 4 and many fixate at lower stages. (Studies among prisoners, for example, have indicated that many of them use Stage 2 moral reasoning.) Although cognitive development is a prerequisite for moral development it is not the only contributory factor. Kohlberg observes that "all morally advanced children are bright but not all bright children are morally advanced (or, all intellectually dull children are morally retarded but not all bright children are morally advanced). Moral maturity requires cognitive maturity<sup>18</sup> but it also requires further features of development."

He stresses that development occurs through interaction (conflict which leads to internal reorganization) and not through passive exposure to higher stages of development.<sup>19</sup>

#### 1.4 CRITIQUE AND OVERVIEW

The importance of Piaget and Kohlberg's theories is that they provide a framework for the cognitive-developmental view of morality. Although Piaget himself did not continue research on moral development, his work has proved valuable for further research. Both Piaget and Kohlberg have been criticized primarily on methodological grounds, Piaget because he did not use a fixed interview schedule or an adequate sample and Kohlberg because he has not published a detailed schedule of his method, though it purports to be of a scientific nature.

##### 1.4.1 Piaget

Piaget appears to have been aware of the problems and limitations of his type of investigation. He states that "you cannot make a

child act in a laboratory in order to dissect his moral conduct. A moral problem presented to the child is far further removed from his moral practice than is an intellectual problem from his logical practice.<sup>20</sup> A further difficulty in assessment by questioning is that the child's verbal thought may not accurately reflect his moral behaviour and in evaluating not his own actions but those of a child in a story told to him his responses become "verbal to the second degree."<sup>21</sup> (His response to his own behaviour is already distanced from his thinking by verbalization, but when the response refers to another's action it is removed by a further step.) It seems logical to suppose that it is precisely because Piaget was aware of these limitations that he chose not to use a fixed interview schedule as an open-ended schedule would be more likely to provide greater variety in the children's answers, thereby increasing the scope of his analysis.

Research studies have shown both support for and refutation of Piaget's hypotheses,<sup>22</sup> as well as moving beyond the limits he set to investigate moral development in adolescents and adults. Kay's review of four studies on adolescents indicates that Piaget's general conclusions can be applied to adolescents with some qualifications, and he concludes, "children and adolescents make moral judgements based firstly on authority, then on considerations of equality and finally by the principle of equity."<sup>23</sup>

It appears, therefore, that Piaget's work should be regarded essentially as a pilot study which presented some valuable ideas for further research.

#### 1.4.2 Kohlberg's methodology

Whereas Piaget's work can be regarded in a pioneering light,

Kohlberg's research is an ongoing process involving long-term follow-up studies. Wright and Croxen make the point that, unlike Piaget, Kohlberg has extensive knowledge of the orthodox experimental tradition in psychology, but has elected to use the cognitive-developmental approach because he is aware of the inadequacies of the experimental tradition in the field of moral development. "It is his thesis that the cognitive-developmental perspective alone permits a satisfactory conceptual integration of such phenomena as resistance to temptation, guilt, altruism, moral thinking and decision-making." <sup>24</sup> It is unfortunate that no detailed schedule of his method has been published - his (unpublished) doctoral dissertation was the primary source for his original derivation of the moral stages. For the determination of their moral stages subjects are rated on their responses to a number of moral dilemmas (which have been published), but the fact that the assessment scale is unavailable discourages independent research - researchers wishing to make use of his methods have to receive personal instruction from him. Wright and Croxen have the suspicion that "intuitive feeling" <sup>25</sup> plays a large part in the assessment which admittedly makes evaluation of Kohlberg's research more difficult, but if intuition is employed because it is considered appropriate to this type of research, it should not be disregarded merely because it cannot be evaluated simply. It is accepted that intuition can play a vital role in the developmental stages of theory-building as long as a point is reached when intuitive judgements can be formulated in a way that enables some form of measurability. Where Kohlberg should be taken to task, therefore, is on the lack of clear guidelines of measurement for

fixed stages and not because of his use of intuition. Although various definitions of intuition have been formulated, if Kohlberg's use of intuition is viewed as inferential thinking, then it fits the definition of intuition as "a special case of inference which utilizes cues and associations not ordinarily used" and, as is pointed out, this view has "a long and respectable history, a history which is relatively unrecognized."<sup>26</sup>

#### 1.4.3 Application of Kohlberg's theory to moral reasoning and moral action

Whereas some criticism of Kohlberg is directed at his unspecified methodology, others criticize the rigidity of some of his claims. He believes that in order to reach a certain stage of development the person must have moved through all the preceding stages (e.g. one cannot skip Stage 3 and move directly from Stage 2 to Stage 4), but has been unable to prove this.<sup>27</sup> A further problem is that although the model allows for the fact that not all persons develop to the highest stages, in a cross-cultural study of subjects from America, Taiwan, Mexico, Turkey and Yucatan only 1% of Taiwanese subjects displayed Stage 6 reasoning and none from Turkey or Yucatan reached Stage 5. Kohlberg explained this absence of Stages 5 and 6 reasoning by stating that the stages "do not develop clearly in preliterate village or tribal communities."<sup>28</sup> Subsequent research appears to be confined to western groups and in a later work Kohlberg asserts that he does not claim that his theory is culturally universal (and by implication this must mean that not all moral stages are universal),<sup>29</sup> but that basic moral principles are universal. Cultural differences can therefore be understood to influence not

only moral behaviour, but also moral thinking.

Kohlberg's discovery that children are able to comprehend reasoning at one stage above their own (and will often favour the reasoning of the higher stage) but are incapable of moral reasoning at two or more stages higher has been accepted by educators.<sup>30-32</sup> It certainly appears to be a commonsense assumption that it is useless for educators to attempt to use their own stage of reasoning with children who are far below that stage because instead of stimulating development to a higher stage they will be misunderstood and their reasoning will therefore be ineffective. Any parent can vouch for the efficacy of "Don't do that or I'll smack you!" when polite reasoned requests have failed. A point that must be highlighted is that it might well be easier to arrive at empirical evaluations of moral behaviour, but Kohlberg stresses that it is not moral action but the moral reasoning behind that action which provides the insight into the true morality of the person. He seems to imply, however, that a person at a high stage of moral reasoning should act in a manner consistent with that stage of reasoning whereas a person at a lower stage may behave in a conventionally moral way without any real understanding of the reason for behaving that way. Kurtines and Greif quote a study which indicated similar behaviour from Stage 2 and Stage 6 males, though the reasons for their behaviour were not given.<sup>33</sup> Robert Coles does not identify specific problems in Piaget and Kohlberg's theories, but while acknowledging great respect for their theories writes of his "perplexity that sometimes slides into pique" as he compares their ideas about moral development with "the thoroughly complicated matter of moral (and yes, spiritual) behavior

in children."

A pertinent example of moral behaviour which does not conform to Piaget and Kohlberg's stage theories is the behaviour and reasoning of Ruby Bridges, the first black child to enter a white school in New Orleans in 1961. Coles relates how at the age of 6 she had to face heckling mobs as she was taken to and from school by federal marshals. Her teacher relates the following incident.

I was standing in the classroom, looking out the window and I saw Ruby coming down the street with the federal marshals on both sides of her. The crowd was there, shouting, as usual. A woman spat at Ruby but missed; Ruby smiled at her. A man shook his fist at her; Ruby smiled at him. Then she walked up the stairs, and she turned and smiled one more time! You know what she told one of the marshals? She told him she prays for those people, the ones in that mob, every night before she goes to sleep! 35

Coles does not attempt to cover up his inability to apply his own psychoanalytic theories to Ruby and others like her and acknowledges the special nature of their moral deeds. Ruby's moral courage in continuing to do what she believed was right in the sight of God ("The minister said God is watching and He won't forget, because He never does. The minister says if I forgive the people, and smile at them and pray for them, God will keep a good eye on everything and He'll be our protection." ) transcends the type of scientific analysis Coles was attempting, and provides evidence of the inadequacies of theories to explain all aspects of moral behaviour.

It is essential that researchers should be aware of the discrepancy between behaviour and reasoning and for this reason it is perhaps more important to develop an understanding of the general principles of Kohlberg's theory rather than to attempt to create



a correlation between research material and a rigid structure. The value of Kohlberg's model lies not in its scientific veracity but in the fact that it provides a fairly extensive description of the range of moral reasoning. It should not be viewed as conclusive and comprehensive nor should it be regarded as the only true description of moral development. It does provide an appropriate framework which can be used to extend moral thinking.

### 1.5 INTEGRATION OF THE CONCEPT OF MORAL TYPES

A major problem with the cognitive-developmental model is the insistence that moral stages develop in an invariant sequence which is irreversible. The concept of irreversibility is problematic because of its concomitant failure to explain adequately how and why shifts in moral reasoning occur. A number of factors which contribute to the utilization of different types of moral reasoning by one person at different times and in different contexts are discussed below.

#### 1.5.1 Over-emphasis on intellectual development

A problem with the cognitive-developmental model arises when too much stress is placed on intellectual development. Shifts in moral reasoning, especially in the case of what would be considered as regression to a lower stage, cannot be explained in cognitive terms, as shifts in intellectual development do not usually occur and intellectual regression would certainly be experienced only under extreme circumstances (e.g. brain damage). Intellectual deficiency may well be a factor which may cause fixation at a lower stage of moral development, but it cannot be

the cause of regression from a higher to a lower stage nor is it the only factor likely to arrest moral development.

### 1.5.2 Emotional influence

Emotional factors can play an influential role in the analysis of causes of fixation and regression, but emotion is largely ignored in the cognitive-developmental model.<sup>38</sup> Emotional disturbance can cause irrational behaviour and irrational thinking. Someone who would usually behave in a morally mature way may understandably react irrationally because of an emotional situation and this may result in a temporary regression to a lower level of moral reasoning. Emotional factors can be linked to situational aspects and personality types which are two other important contributory variables which affect moral reasoning.

### 1.5.3 Personality

A greater understanding of the scope of development is achieved by recognition of the contribution to moral diversity made by personality types, whether the typology is detailed (as in the case of Peck and Havighurst<sup>39</sup>) or extremely unsophisticated (as in the simple division of personality into the introvert and extravert categories). As there will be any number of personality differences within a given group there will be a range of responses representing different types of moral reasoning within each moral stage. These responses will be dependent not on the cognitive level of development but on the personality type. A child conforming to a certain personality type will proceed through different moral stages while developing in a manner

consistent with his or her own personality. Personality typing can also reveal reasons for discrepancies between moral reasoning and moral action at higher moral stages. A person of the introverted personality type may know what the "right" moral action is, but may fail to carry moral knowledge through into action because of fear of social embarrassment.

If it is accepted that it is possible for different types of reasoning to co-exist in the same person and to co-exist with the development of moral stages then a number of the problems associated with Kohlberg's inability to explain shifting moral reasoning will fall away.

#### 1.5.4 Contextual influence

When situational factors are considered, similar explanations as to how and why shifts in moral reasoning occur are provided. Every moral dilemma should be viewed in terms of its context as the context will determine the type of moral reasoning which is employed.

The question of socialization in respect of attitudes is discussed by Hartman, a social psychologist, who suggests that insufficient attention is given to the mental context which forms attitudes.<sup>40</sup> Assessment by means of attitude scores which ignore contextual contributions to attitudes fail to explain why those attitudes prevail. A parallel can be drawn with regard to moral reasoning. Within different contexts (e.g. school, home, work) different value systems seem to operate. These value systems are dependent on the socialization which occurs in these particular contexts and therefore every person can be regarded as being

socialized in different ways. This explains why a person in a particular situation will exhibit moral behaviour which appears to be inappropriate to the majority of his moral actions; for example, a child who never tells lies at home may tell lies at school because his friends do or because he is afraid of punishment. Similarly someone who would consider shop-lifting a serious crime would not hesitate to take home office stationery for personal use. The moral reasoning which motivates these actions clearly operates on different levels in different situations because a different type of reasoning develops in a particular environment.

Sometimes action which seems inappropriate to the moral maturity of the person concerned may be the result of a temporary lapse in moral reasoning, but a context-dependent view of the development of the types of moral reasoning provides an explanation as to why people may consistently behave in what others may consider an unacceptable and inappropriate manner. A researcher discovered that members of a working-class group regarded honesty in a limited way - only in dealings with each other were they scrupulously honest.<sup>41</sup> This moral specificity is a component of the total moral make-up which cannot be ignored during the assessment of moral response.

#### 1.5.5 Conclusion

In conclusion I reiterate the need for synthesis in viewing moral growth. Kay's view is that "in general outline one may trace moral growth through a series of sequential, qualitatively different stages and also along a line of growth marked by

quantitatively increasing stability and complexity."<sup>42</sup> Its complexity, however, is not fully explored unless the idea of coexistent types of moral reasoning (dependent on the moral components of emotion, personality and context) is integrated to contribute to a deeper comprehension of the totality that is moral development.

## 1.6 THE RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT

The question now arises whether a relationship exists between moral development and religious development, and if it does, to what extent one is dependent upon the other. Kohlberg claims to have found no important moral differences among Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Buddhists, Moslems and atheists,<sup>43</sup> but he does not completely discount religious influence. He sees religious development as occurring within a parallel religious structure in which religious reasoning follows the same developmental pattern as moral reasoning. He would argue that it is possible to reach a high level of morality without being religious and that adherence to religion need not necessarily result in a high level of morality as religious development could be arrested just as moral development can be. This does not necessarily mean that there is no place for Christian morality within this structure. Duska and Whelan point out that "a Christian perspective provides a content for the formal structure that Kohlberg identified. Christianity will provide religious reasons for our moral beliefs."<sup>44</sup>

Kohlberg has outlined some religious characteristics of parallel religious stages in The Philosophy of Moral Development.<sup>45</sup>

Prior to its publication Duska and Whelan had worked through his moral stages to provide an independent Christian perspective on

development which includes positive suggestions of ways in which the Church can stimulate religious development. They suggest, for example, that children who are at the punishment-obedience stage should not be presented with a picture of a punishing God. If an appeal is made to the next stage of reasoning (where good is what satisfies their own and sometimes others' needs) and a conception of God as a father or saviour who wants them to be happy is presented, a more positive picture emerges and they are able to begin to conceive of God as someone to befriend, not someone to fear.<sup>46</sup>

Kohlberg's work has stimulated research in specialized areas,<sup>47</sup> such as work with problem children,<sup>48</sup> and studies on religious motivation<sup>49</sup> and the forgiveness of sin. It has also stimulated interest in the need to work towards the formulation of a Christian moral education model and created awareness among<sup>50,51</sup> Christian educators of inappropriate methods. In a related area of investigation Fowler has devised a developmental model<sup>52</sup> of stages of faith. These studies are unfortunately too specific to be of value to my research, but it is interesting to note that they all have a common denominator - they have provided their own content for Kohlberg's formal structure. The importance of Kohlberg's theory for the Christian educator seems to be that it provides a model from which valid bases can be abstracted and built upon by adding Christian values, not excluding them.

## CHAPTER 2. THE MORAL RESPONSE IN LITERATURE

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

In order to assess the religious and moral response of children to certain works of literature it is necessary to establish a theoretical framework of approach in the literary as well as the moral developmental field. This chapter examines the relationship between literature and religion, and includes assessment of literary approaches to the religious element in literature as well as a brief outline of Gunn's approach to the study of literature and religion.

Children's responses are sought to moral situations in two broad divisions of literature, moralistic and fantasy literature. Although none of the books conforms to the definition of a moralistic book (in the sense that Mrs Sherwood's The History of the Fairchild Family [referred to below] can be called a moralistic book), some do contain moralistic passages, and therefore possible responses to moralism are examined together with critical evaluation of the moralistic viewpoint. Similarly critical viewpoints on fantasy and its theoretical potential to stimulate moral reasoning are discussed.

The possible effects that literature may have on children are examined. Because of the emphasis placed on the responses of children to selected works in this study, the discipline of reader response theory is evaluated in terms of its contribution to the literary assessment of children's responses. A model of

literary understanding, that of Purves, is outlined and the interrelationship of its components, writer, reader, text and audience provides a structure upon which the analysis of children's responses (undertaken in Chapters 3 and 4) is loosely based.

## 2.2 LITERATURE AND RELIGION

The relationship between literature and religion is one that has evolved from the earliest times. Ziolkowski posits, "In most cultures of the world, religion and literature are still indistinguishably linked at the moment when they emerge from the mists of prehistory" and that "man has usually consecrated his first poetic efforts to the service of his worship."<sup>1</sup> This relationship has been progressively weakened by the secularization of modern western society and therefore literature has been "increasingly produced by a consciousness ... no longer christocentric or generally religious by disposition."<sup>2</sup> Religious literature has therefore become merely a component of literature as religion is no longer the primary motivating force behind the expression of literature. It is difficult to identify religious literature as a genre, however, because the problem of what constitutes religious literature is created by the fact that the utilization of religious themes and motifs is no longer confined to proponents of a particular belief. The religious motif can be viewed as a literary device and can be used to parody and criticize religious belief<sup>3</sup> as well as promote favourable religious feeling.

Gunn makes the point that there is a new emphasis in the study



of the relationship between literary expression and religious belief, which is an attempt "to reconstitute the discussion on the plane of the hermeneutical rather than the apologetic, the anthropological rather than the theological, the broadly humanistic rather than the narrowly doctrinal."<sup>4</sup> Whereas before, the study of the relationship between literature and religion was sharply divided into: (i) literary critics who related religious meanings to aesthetic categories; and (ii) religious thinkers who tended to subordinate literature to theological concerns, Gunn indicates that the new emphasis is an attempt on the part of scholars in both literature and religious studies to overcome what he terms "this artificial and crippling polarization."<sup>5</sup> Gunn uses Abram's model of the history of literary criticism<sup>6</sup> which outlines the relationship of the work to the universe, the audience and the artist, and he applies Abram's delineation of the kinds of critical theories to the study of religious elements in literature. Abram's theories are the mimetic (in which the imitation of the universe is stressed), the pragmatic (in which the instruction of the audience is stressed), the expressive (which concentrates on the author's feelings) and the objective (in which the work is judged solely by criteria intrinsic to its own mode of being). Gunn's comprehensive review of the ways in which critics in the literature and religion field conform to these orientations is too extensive for inclusion here, but the problems he identifies within each orientation are pertinent.

Briefly stated the problems are: (i) objective (semantic) orientation - in discussing the religious elements or motifs of a literary work, literature may be turned into a surrogate for

philosophy or theology, or religion may be reduced merely to the work's dimension of seriousness or depth; (ii) expressive orientation - in stressing the artist's vision the critic may inaccurately identify the artist's own point of view with that of a character; (iii) pragmatic orientation - literature can be expected to perform a redemptive function (formerly religion's function alone) and literature can be turned into a form of propaganda; and (iv) mimetic orientation - in concentrating on the specific internal design of each work as a reflection of reality, the work may be isolated from the general religious and cultural situation it reflects and the effect that the design of each work has on its readers may be ignored.<sup>7</sup> Despite his awareness of these problems, Gunn does not reject these orientations, but suggests that a "principled eclecticism"<sup>8</sup> is necessary, and that many of the limitations of the orientations can be overcome "if we complement our several senses of the imitative, the pragmatic, the expressive, and the semantic character of literature with an appreciation of its hypothetical character as well."<sup>9</sup>

His inclusion of the hypothetical character of literature acknowledges Dorothy van Ghent's idea that the tendency of all great literature is to take the known, the empirically given in experience, and to "push it into the dimension of the unknown,"<sup>10</sup> and he suggests that this raises the question of whether this idea of literature is not intrinsically religious. Once again, it is necessary to abbreviate his argument considerably; he identifies three concepts which contribute to consideration of the idea that every work of literature has a spiritual component: (i) every work of literature presupposes belief in a "commitment to vital possibility"<sup>11</sup> representing a "half-conscious, half-

unconscious faith in all that lies beyond the range of our immediate perception";<sup>12</sup> (ii) the potential outcomes of imaginative situations in literature must be commensurate with "our deepest sense of ourselves" for them to be acceptable to us - we respond with the centre of our being;<sup>13</sup> and (iii) in our experience of literature there is something related to (not identical with) the religious experience of reality as ultimate - serious literature is based on what is conceived of as "the ground of experience itself".<sup>14</sup>

I do not agree that every work of literature has a spiritual component, but as Gunn continually refers to "great" or "serious" literature it appears that he too applies his theory in a limited way although he does not specify its limitations. The value of his theory is that it provides an approach to the study of religion and literature which is both literary and religious. In addition, it obviates the need for, and in fact repudiates the validity of a definition of "religious literature". This study explores the expression of religious and moral values in literature, but the literature selected is not what might conventionally be regarded as "religious literature" or "moral literature". The selected works do have a religious or moral component, however, and Gunn's elaboration of the different orientations brings into focus the different emphases of two broad approaches to literature relevant to this study, namely moralism and fantasy.

As a central aim of this study is the assessment of children's response to moral situations in literature, the stories selected all deal with morality in some form or another, but are not

necessarily moralistic. A number of fantasy stories are included because the theme of the struggle between good and evil is common in fantasy. All the stories can be regarded as examples of the pragmatic orientation to a certain degree because they are instructing the reader by conveying moral values. If, however, the writer allows moral purpose to intrude to the extent that it overrides other literary considerations or becomes the sole motivation for writing (i.e. if the writer abuses the pragmatic orientation), then the writer has gone beyond the sphere of morality and the writing can be judged as moralistic. Whereas the pragmatic orientation is present in fantasy, its primary orientation is clearly the hypothetical, with a strong emphasis on the expressive orientation (in terms of consideration of the artist's vision in the creation of a fantasy world), as well. It cannot be maintained that fantasy and moralism are mutually exclusive, however, because despite fantasy's primarily hypothetical orientation, it is possible for a fantasy to be moralistic if the orientation shifts to the pragmatic. None of the stories in this study is definitely categorized as moralistic however, although moralistic passages are identified, because the emphasis in the study is on the children's responses to the moral situations in the literature rather than their ability to identify moralism.

Before approaching the question of children's responses a broad literary review of the general understanding of moralistic literature and fantasy literature is given. The religious emphasis of each approach is outlined, and a speculative evaluation of the potential ability of each approach to stimulate moral reasoning is made.

### 2.3 MORALISTIC LITERATURE

The terms moralism and didacticism tend to be used in a pejorative sense especially when related to children's literature as it is commonly believed that children are more susceptible to influence than adults. Didacticism is not inherently moralistic, but because much didactic writing is overtly moralistic, didacticism and moralism have come to be regarded synonymously by many critics. Outside of the literary sphere didacticism is a morally neutral term, as instruction is a necessary facet of life. Instruction through literature, however, raises the problems of moral intention and literary integrity as discussed above. The desirability of children's learning from literature is not at question because it is assumed that literature should benefit them in some way, but what they learn and how it is taught to them are the controversial issues. The distinction between moralism and morality must be clear. Children's books can be thought of as being inherently didactic (in the neutral sense), whether a child learns to laugh or to face adversity, but when an author sets out specifically to teach children about a certain issue, then the book becomes (in the pejorative sense) a didactic book. It is didactic literature of the overt kind rather than didacticism per se which is criticized. (In Gunn's terms overt didacticism would involve a negative use of the pragmatic orientation.)

The earliest children's writers were cognisant of the influence that they wielded and were unabashedly didactic, secure in the belief that their works would lead children to heaven. Titles such as

Candid Notices; Religious and Moral, Designed to Amuse the  
 15  
Mind and Amend the Heart and Token for Children: Being

an Account of the Conversion, Holy and Exemplary Lives and  
 16

Joyful Deaths of Several Young Children obviate the need for

speculation as to the authors' moral intention. Their aim was to teach, to warn, to admonish and to guide and they were not

ashamed to admit it nor afraid to expose children to horrific incidents in order to terrify them into submission. Fairy tales

were condemned because they were not true<sup>17</sup> or bowdlerized

because of unsuitable sections,<sup>18</sup> but Mrs Sherwood deemed the

sight of a rotting corpse dangling from a gibbet to be a suitable

warning to children in the Fairchild Family.<sup>19</sup> Although the

scene was removed from later editions, it involved the children's

being taken by their father to view the rotting corpse which was

to show them where bad temper (which they had displayed earlier)

might lead them. The customary Victorian death-bed scenes,

intended to show the need for virtuous behaviour as death might

claim a child at any time, must have seemed quite innocuous by

comparison. How successful the moralist writers were in conveying

their message can only be surmised although Kohlberg would surely

categorize their moral reasoning as being at the obedience/punish-

ment stage<sup>20</sup> and would presumably argue that behaviour would

not be long-lasting unless fixation at that stage of reasoning

occurred. This would certainly not be considered advantageous

by Kohlberg although it may have been what the writers were

intending to accomplish. Egoff writes of Mrs Sherwood:

[She] intended to show children the importance of a religious education. What emerges is the picture of an adult society that is obsessed with religion to the point of distortion and with maintaining power over children, particularly retaliatory power. It is hardly a society

that any right-minded children would want to join, and, of course, they eventually did not - not in the religious, social or literary sense. 21

Because moralism tends to be associated with writers like Mrs Sherwood, it may well be assumed that moralism in children's literature is a thing of the past and that modern children's literature has outgrown the overtly didactic stage, but this is not the case. Although the theme is often not religious, many children's books are still directed at delivering a message whether it is feminist, conservationist or anti-racist. As with early didactic writers the sincerity of the writers of new didacticism and their enthusiasm for their cause are not necessarily questionable. In fact, many though not all of the causes espoused are admirable ones, but when the execution of ideals overrides common literary standards the books are little better than the tracts of the nineteenth century. Once again the question is whether the messages are received, and then whether they are favourably received, by the children at whom they are directed and whether they offer the children any lasting values. Many of the problems raised are solved rather simplistically<sup>22</sup> so that children are in fact presented with a false view of reality in which problems occur but are dispensed with fairly rapidly. If a problem is handled sensitively by the writer and is well integrated in the story, the problem situation can prove to be a growth experience for the characters without necessarily forming the central theme of the story. The reader can appreciate the problem and its implications in context without having to endure a "problem novel". Unfortunately the problem situation is not confined to adolescents - the Golden Learn about Living Series<sup>23</sup> deals with subjects like divorce, death and sexual abuse

in a picture book format!

Two views which do not favour the new didacticism are those of Hunt and Fox. Hunt writes:

Children's reading lists now include categories on divorce, physical handicaps, old age and death, minority problems, poverty, inner city life, ecology, war, magic and astrology, and others. In some cases it is not the subject I disagree with so much as the way the subject is handled. These are books with a message, often with inconsequential plots and characters, thinly disguised "moralisms" which editors have so disdained in a more puritanical age. Except that the books in question are hardly puritanical. Their "moralisms" derive from the contemporary emphasis that we must all be understanding and non-condemning. In doing this, I believe they demean human potential. <sup>24</sup>

She adds, "A good book is not problem-centred; it is people-centred. It reveals how to be a human being and what the possibilities of life are; it offers hope." <sup>25</sup>

Fox tells of a book rejected for television adaption because although it was of "superior" quality it was not a crisis story dealing with "diabetics, suicides, teenage pregnancies, etc." She states, "The 'etc.' speaks powerfully of the way in which the most profound and painful difficulties of living have become trivialized" and adds, "The implicit instructions of contemporary 'realistic' books may vary from those of 1810, but they have the same sequel: they smother speculation, they stifle uncertainty, <sup>26</sup> they strangle imagination."

Moralistic writers tend to underestimate the ability of the children for whom they are writing to sense that they are being lectured, and they insult their intelligence by offering them a plot which is "only a thin disguise for dumping the Christian <sup>27</sup> message" or any other message. Children may skip the moralizing



sections, and thereby neutralize the author's influence, but Lukens posits that moralistic literature can have a detrimental effect.

[S]ugar-coating a moral by surrounding it with a shallow story deficient in plot, character portrayal, and style does injustice to children. They come to a story excited by the promise of pleasure only to discover they have been tricked into a sermon. The preached-at child may come to reject all reading and thus to close off the vast discoveries about human beings and society available in literature. 29

### 2.3.1 The ability of moralistic literature to stimulate moral reasoning

It appears that moralistic literature is confined to a limited sphere of influence and that by providing a solution or explanation in a definite non-negotiable manner it is unlikely to stimulate moral thinking and, in effect, tends to stifle moral questioning. The intention of the moralistic writer must be considered, and most often the aim is not to encourage the reader to explore the possibilities presented by the moral situation, but to provide the reader with a moral blueprint for behaviour and to present the reader with the correct reasons justifying that mode of behaviour. The reader is therefore encouraged to accept rather than employ reasoning. In the religious sphere the child is told or shown what to believe rather than encouraged to develop his or her own belief by discovering spiritual truths. Unwittingly this may contribute to the development of religious doubt because if a child accepts a religious viewpoint without reasoning about it, reasoning at a later stage may result in the rejection of that viewpoint, and because of the disillusionment accompanying the rejection the child may not only reject that particular religious viewpoint but all religious conceptions.

When moralistic literature is rejected by the reader, two results may occur. If the reader totally opposes the writer's viewpoint, he or she may adopt behaviour opposite to that propagated by the writer. If the moralistic writing is merely ignored, it has no effect on the reader. If moralistic writing is successful (i.e. in the writer's view) it may provide a pattern of thought for a particular moral situation, but it is limited by its specificity and will not lead to "true knowledge of the good"<sup>30</sup> because it does not encourage active participation in moral reasoning but advocates passive acceptance of the correct moral behaviour. These speculative theoretical deductions are investigated further during the interviews.

## 2.4 FANTASY

Because the fantasy genre encompasses such a broad spectrum of writing it is difficult to attempt to compile a concise definition. Egoff claims that "[m]odern fantasy in its totality is the richest and most varied of all the genres."<sup>31</sup> It is possible to list a number of components characteristic of fantasy, but this will not necessarily depict the essence of fantasy. Numerous authors' attempts to analyse fantasy could be examined, but once again this would not necessarily define it. Tolkien's comment referring to the realm of Faerie appears to be pertinent to fantasy as well: "It has many ingredients, but analysis will not necessarily discover the secret of the whole."<sup>32</sup> Perhaps the best solution is not to make any pretence at devising a comprehensive definition but to concentrate on aspects of fantasy which are relevant to the stories chosen for this study.

Essentially fantasy involves a world view which is magic in  
<sup>33</sup>orientation. Because of this action of magic fantasy can be  
 regarded as being otherworldly although the degree of other-  
 worldliness differs. Tolkien introduces the concept of man as  
<sup>34</sup>a sub-creator creating a secondary world. Fantasy literature  
 is dependent on the establishment of some form of secondary world  
 for its existence, but the structure of the secondary world need  
 not necessarily be as completely otherworldly as Tolkien's  
 Middle-earth. It can be the "once upon a time" world of the fairy  
 tale, another world in the sense of a new world, a totally Other  
 World or this world caught up in another time. The Other World  
 can impinge on the real world and some writers feel that fantasy  
 which makes the transition from the real world to the Other World  
 (and back) is most effective. Zahorski and Boyer quote Lord Dun-  
 sany's "frontier of twilight" which separates the primary from  
<sup>35</sup>the secondary world, Langton mentions the puncturing of the  
<sup>36</sup>cloth that separates the real and fantasy worlds and Hoffeld  
 writes of the appeal of the "sense of boundary" where the two  
 worlds meet. "The fantasies work because they are bound by what  
 is recognizably reality, because the greenwood ends and the  
 cities begin, because there is a wall around the garden and the  
<sup>37</sup>dreamer lies dreaming on the cold ground outside."

It is important to recognize that although magic removes fantasy  
 from the real world, fantasy and reality (although opposites)  
 are not mutually exclusive because the best fantasy succeeds as  
 literature because of its relationship to reality. Two views  
 which support this idea are those of Zanger and Egoff:

Fantasy ... always exists in a symbiotic relationship with  
 reality and its conventionalized representation, depending

on it for its existence and at the same time commenting upon it, criticizing it, and illuminating it. 38

Fantasy is a literature of paradox. It is the discovery of the real within the unreal, the credible within the incredible, the believable within the unbelievable. 39

The fairy-tale world is an example of this. It provides an other-worldly setting in which everyday reality can be reflected. Early criticism in Victorian times of fairy tales as unsuitable for children probably arose primarily because much of the literature was unsuitable as it had never been intended for the entertainment of children. Even bowdlerized versions were deprecated, however, because it was felt that children should not be misled by stories that were not true - their literature ought to prepare them for the harsh realities of life. What the Victorian moralist writers failed to recognize was that the fairy tales contain great truths about the nature of man which although they are portrayed in otherworldly situations do have relevance for the real world, and as will be argued elsewhere, their value lies in the self-evident nature of their relevance which need not be didactically spelt out. C.S. Lewis defends fairy tales against the charge that they give children a false impression of their world.

I think what profess to be realistic stories for children are far more likely to deceive them. I never expected the real world to be like the fairy tales: I think that I did expect school to be like the school stories. The fantasies did not deceive me: the school stories did. 40

The problems related to realism in children's literature are partially dependent on the lack of clarity in our understanding of reality. Representation of an aspect of the real world, no matter how accurately it is executed, does not portray reality if it is meaningless to the reader (cf. Gunn's idea that literature

relates to "our deepest sense of ourselves"<sup>41</sup>). The reader should be able to sense the author's "emotional reality" whether the story is a realistic one or a fantasy.<sup>42</sup> There needs to be recognition that "the reality to which we relate is not necessarily a matter of time, place or character, but of the basic needs we feel."<sup>43</sup> Reality is concerned with our real selves as well as our real world, and fantasy succeeds when it addresses our real selves even though it may be excluding our real world.

It is this exclusion or transformation of the real world that evokes the criticism that fantasy is escapist literature. "Escapism" by implication creates the impression that the literature encourages children not to confront real problems and to evade their responsibilities. The defence of fantasy on this charge is supported by two arguments which effectively constitute the same argument expressed in different ways. The protagonists' understanding of the function of escapism directs their arguments. If fantasy literature encourages escapism, it is necessary to find out not only what the reader is encouraged to escape from, but also what the reader is escaping to. Some fantasy writing can be classified as "pure" escapism because it allows the reader to escape into a world of wish-fulfilment and offers nothing on return to the real world. Good fantasy enables the reader to return to the real world with something captured or assimilated, however unconsciously it may have happened, during the "escape". Escape can therefore be regarded as having both a negative and a positive function.

Those who acknowledge that fantasy literature constitutes escape qualify their approval of its escapism by examining the situation

from which the escape occurs. Tolkien names Escape as one of the main functions of fairy stories<sup>44</sup> and rejects the scorn with which it is viewed in literature. His Escape is a refusal to acknowledge the trappings of modern technology as being more real than nature. "How real, how startlingly alive is a factory chimney compared with an elm tree: poor obsolete thing, insubstantial dream of an escapist!"<sup>45</sup> Escape is given a positive connotation; it is not a flight from reality but a reaffirmation of ideal reality, the world as it should be. Zanger summarizes the effects of the works of fantasy writers who concern themselves with social reality:

The creators of high fantasy offered to their readers a mundus alter that resolutely denied the most pressing and problematical aspects of their real world, but never forgot any of them. These denials of reality were rooted in an acute sensitivity to that world's failure to provide beauty, order, and community. 46

Not all fantasy of this kind is successful or effective, but when it does achieve its aim it legitimates its escapism by its critique of the real world and its substitution of a positive world view.

The second argument takes the line of defence that fantasy is not escapist because it does not attempt to negate the primary world which is left behind but to enhance it by what is gained during the temporary sojourn in the secondary world. Lloyd Alexander defends fantasy thus:

It can refresh and delight, certainly; give us a new vision; make us weep or laugh. None of these possibilities constitutes escape, or denial of something most of us begin to suspect at a rather early age: that being alive in the world is a hard piece of business. 47

The reader is always aware that return to the real world is inevitable and often return can be an escape in itself because the fantasy world may be more demanding than the real world.

"For while the fantasists do have us retreat or escape from the ordinary world into a strange 'secret garden,' they force us at the same time to confront the 'truths' - truths that are often  
<sup>48</sup>  
 awesome and even bitter." The "truths" are not confined to the fantasy world though as they are "universal truths", so once they have been "confronted" they can be assimilated by the reader and do not dissipate when the reader returns to the real world. The implication is that something is gained and not lost by entry into the fantasy world and that the reader, rather than escaping from a bad primary world, has escaped to a better secondary world.

Both the "escape from" and the "escape to" attitudes portray a positive function of fantasy, i.e. its ability to reflect indirectly on the real world without the presumption of a lecture. The fantasy world goes beyond realism and offers the readers an added dimension without making its values obtrusive. As the stories unfold implicit truths are presented as an integral part of the story so that the readers discover them themselves, and different readers may discover different things which makes them no less valuable or true. Susan Cooper sees the process of discovery as an inevitable result of entering a fantasy world.

[W]e're going out of time, out of space, into the unconscious, that dreamlike world which has in it all the images and emotions accumulated since the human race began. We aren't escaping out, we're escaping in, without any idea of what we may encounter. Fantasy is the metaphor through which we discover ourselves. <sup>49</sup>

Discovery stresses fantasy's creative element in that the readers not only participate in the fantasy world which has been created, but in a sense recreate it because of their newly discovered understanding of what it means to them personally. By discovering values they claim them as their own,<sup>50</sup> even though they may have had no knowledge of the situations from which the values emerge. In fantasy children are able to experience vicariously the equivalent of something which does happen in reality but may not ever happen to them.<sup>51</sup> They may not ever have to face a dragon, but they may gain an insight into the courage needed to face a murderer even though they may never meet one.

The last word on escapist literature belongs to Ursula Le Guin. "Fake realism is the escapist literature of our time. And probably the ultimate escapist reading is that masterpiece of total unreality, the daily Stock Market Report."<sup>52</sup>

#### 2.4.1 The ability of fantasy to stimulate moral reasoning

It has been posited that fantasy worlds are related to the real world and that fantasy is not an escape from the world but a means of presenting a clearer perception of real life situations. Most writers, when they write about fantasy, imply that it has a somewhat spiritual function. Egoff writes of fantasists as follows:

their basic concern is with the wholesomeness of the human soul or, to use a more contemporary term, the integrity of the self. This is the major theme of fantasy, although it is played out in many guises and always in a thoroughly undidactic manner. <sup>53</sup>

Lloyd Alexander writes of the creation of "numinous moments" in



literature and claims that such creation "is not an act of will,  
<sup>54</sup>  
 but more an act of faith." Timmerman makes the point that the  
 goal of fantasy, "the central point of the genre", is to lead  
 the reader to keener self-understanding.

The artist of vision and fantasy expects us to learn  
 something about ourselves by having made a sojourn  
 through fantasy, to probe our spiritual nature, to grow  
 in experience, to resolve our lives toward new directions.  
 If fantasy begins in another world, it is in order to  
 reach that mysterious other world of the human soul. <sup>55</sup>

This spiritual emphasis has contributed to the idea that fantasy  
 contains a deliberately didactic element. Although Egoff stresses  
 that fantasy is undidactic, Timmerman mentions that we are  
 expected to learn something. The question arises as to whether  
 the author's conscious intention to teach is a prerequisite for  
 the reader's learning experience. As the learning process is  
 intensely personal, a self-discovery course as it were, it seems  
 logical to assume that the reader can learn without being taught  
 as each reader may discover something different. The reader is  
 therefore an active participant in the learning experience and  
 does not merely passively accept values which are explicitly  
 imposed. The emphasis is on stimulating of ideas of a numinous  
 or spiritual nature rather than acceptance of a rigidly defined  
 set of spiritual values.

Molson contends that ethical fantasy (which he defines as  
 "contemporary fantasy for older children and young adolescents  
 that is explicitly concerned with the existence of good and  
 evil and the morality of human behaviour" <sup>56</sup>) is didactic but  
 that "didacticism is not the same as moralizing or prosely-  
<sup>57</sup>  
 tizing."

Because ethical fantasy is didactic does not mean that its assumption about good and evil and the importance of ethical decision-making in the lives of young people need appear as inert propositions, stale maxims and hackneyed morals inserted into the plot at supposedly appropriate places. On the contrary, these assumptions become grist for the mill of the imagination and emerge transformed into narrative patterns and plot elements, aspects of characterization, and even symbols. 58

Once again the imaginative aspect is stressed. Characters in the stories have to make moral decisions but there is no easy moral formula for them to follow and the manner in which they confront evil is not romanticized. Often they are reluctant to accept their roles (e.g. Bilbo in The Hobbit and Meg in A Wrinkle in Time - these situations are discussed in detail when the stories are analysed in Chapter 4) and the reader is able to identify with the realistic portrayal of their reluctance. Those who choose to oppose evil are ordinary characters, not paragons of virtue. By presenting the options available to the characters and by allowing the reader to assess the consequences of the choices to be made, the author is able to convey something of the nature of good and evil without making a deliberate statement. The didacticism, even if intentional, is implicit not explicit.

It is interesting that fantasy is viewed with suspicion not only by those who accuse fantasy writers of presenting a didactic religious message, but by religious believers themselves. Three negative religious responses to fantasy may be discussed. The first is concerned with the fantasy/reality argument as outlined above but it is specifically related to religious reality. Quinn suggests that fantasy actually harms the imagination because it encourages the reader "to distrust if not despise reality."

He questions the effects of fantasy on theological grounds and asks "how are we to know the reality of God except through the real creation?"<sup>59</sup> Hunt relates an incident in which a university student averred that he would never tell his child about Santa Claus because the child might conclude when he discovered that Santa Claus was not real that Jesus Christ was not real either. Her ten-year-old's response was, "I knew about Santa Claus, like I knew about elves and other pretend things. I never got him mixed up with the Lord Jesus because I could tell from the way my parents talked and acted all year long that Jesus was true."<sup>60</sup>

The second response is that fantasy is religiously useless. Lawhead points out that Christians have a problem with pleasure. "If a dragon, a goblin or a singing horse can't tell you how to improve your prayer life, or show you how to witness to your neighbour, then it has no use."<sup>61</sup> Apart from its function in providing relaxation, fantasy has been shown to have a spiritual function even though it may not be as concretely related to specific Christian actions as some might wish it to be. Gunn points out that literature with a spiritual component cannot be supposed to make us any more or less religious, but that it is questionable that it would be a good thing if it did. "There is some evidence, however, that literature can, by quickening our sense of possibility and complicating our imagination of good and ill, at least help to make us a little more human."<sup>62</sup> This contribution to our humanness could well be understood to point to literature's usefulness to the Christian.

The third response takes the form of suspicion bordering on fear.

Hunt notes a Christian tendency towards inhibition in the creative field and a fear of "contamination" which causes people to be wary of anything that has not been clearly labelled Christian.<sup>63</sup> This fear is extended to include the idea that fantasy is demonic.<sup>64</sup> Timmerman cites an essay in Dove magazine (a publication of Faith Ministries Association in Pittsburgh) that denigrated fantasy as "pernicious, false and a tool of Satan", and attacked Tolkien although the writer did not appear to have read Tolkien firsthand.<sup>65</sup> This insecurity in the face of the hypothetical dimension of fantasy tends to ignore and even deny the narrative strength of the gospel story. Tolkien writes of the joy of the happy ending of a fairy tale, of the "eucatastrophe", and intimates that the gospels contain "the greatest and most complete conceivable eucatastrophe ... The Birth of Christ is the eucatastrophe of Man's history. The Resurrection is the eucatastrophe of the story of the Incarnation. This story begins and ends in joy."<sup>66</sup> Failure to recognize the joy, the "sudden and miraculous grace"<sup>67</sup> of fantasy on the part of those who regard fantasy as spiritually suspect implies a lack of spiritual understanding of the Gospel Story itself.

Conversely, some critics view with suspicion any book which has a mythical or spiritual atmosphere as they assume that the author is trying to impose a moral viewpoint. Dixon attacks in particular the treatment of evil in fantasy. Because there is "an evil power or force which is of non-human origin",<sup>68</sup> he sees this as an evasion of human responsibility for social conditions and claims that the effect is the same as that of tract literature, namely "to divert people from the here and now and persuade

them that it's not possible to do anything about the problems of the world."<sup>69</sup> He fails to recognize the fact that the characters in fantasy do not meekly submit to evil and that by combating problems in the fantasy world they address the problems of the real world. Zanger stresses the political and social dimension of magic in high fantasy because fantasy "dramatizes the successful resistance of heroic individuals to faceless power, the successful resistance of the familiar, personal world to the impersonal forces that would alter or destroy it."<sup>70</sup> Molson's is another view opposite to that of Dixon. He uses Shea's understanding of biblical story to illustrate ethical fantasy's societal function:

[Ethical fantasy] through its mythlike story patterns ... not only sustains its audience's sense of self-worth but also demonstrates graphically that it is responsible for its actions which may very well affect all society. Like the function of myth in biblical story, the story patterns of ethical fantasy urge readers to stand up and be counted, to choose, and to act.<sup>71</sup>

There is a need to establish the quality of the fantasy writing before conclusions can be made about its ability to stimulate moral thinking. Obviously, not all fantasy has a spiritual element (in spite of its hypothetical orientation) and it is debatable whether its spiritual nature should automatically qualify fantasy as "good" fantasy. Fantasy writing does exist which very probably does not stimulate the reader to examine situations from a moral viewpoint and which may not require evaluation of characters' behaviour or of societal conditions. The fantasy stories selected for this study, however, deal with the struggle between good and evil in various ways and therefore inevitably involve the characters in a moral choice. Dixon's criticism of the treatment of evil in fantasy which implies that

moral responsibility is stifled may well apply to some fantasy writing, but he directs it at writers like J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis and Madeleine L'Engle<sup>72</sup> who are considered to be "good" fantasy writers by many other critics. (Individual criticisms are discussed during story analysis in Chapter 4.) He ignores the moral responsibility implicit in decision-making. Characters choose whether to be on the side of good or evil and although almost invariably the choice is made for good the process by which decisions are arrived at is personal and individual. The reader is not presented with a simplistic formula in which an easy choice brings instant happiness. The possibilities of other choices are made clear - characters can choose to do nothing or to pursue actively the evil choice - but every choice involves moral responsibility as not only the decision-maker is affected<sup>73</sup> by the choice.

These then are the theoretical speculations about the nature of fantasy and its functions. It seems reasonable to assume that fantasy has a potential ability to stimulate moral reasoning. The removal of the reader from the real world to an Other World creates sufficient distance to enable the writer to deal with moral questions in a non-prescriptive manner. The element of free choice further distinguishes morality from moralism. A moralistic choice involves telling the reader why a particular choice should be made whereas a truly moral choice involves the reader's own discovery of why a choice should be made. The discovery process enables the reader to reason through moral questions and to absorb spiritual truths at his or her own pace. Fantasy does not appear to require special cognitive ability,<sup>74</sup> and therefore a child may read, for example, The Lion, the Witch and the

Wardrobe several times before making a conscious connection between Aslan and Jesus Christ. The child may, of course, never make the connection, but this does not mean that the book has been misunderstood. Whatever the child is able to understand about Aslan's sacrifice becomes his or her own discovery, and whether that discovery is replaced by new ones or not, its spiritual validity for the child at that particular level of understanding remains unimpaired. The child is therefore not forced into accepting spiritual values beyond his or her comprehension, but is perhaps encouraged by the hint of their presence to discover them later. In conclusion:

It is by such statements as, "Once upon a time there was a dragon" or "In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit", - it is by such beautiful non-facts that we fantastic human beings may arrive, in our peculiar fashion, at the truth. 75

## 2.5 EFFECTS OF LITERATURE AND READER RESPONSE THEORY

Although the idea that literature can and does influence children is generally accepted, it is necessary to consider some of the ways in which this influence has been assessed. In 1958 David Russell stated that

the effects of reading are an uncharted wasteland in an otherwise well-mapped territory. We have discovered many facts about eye-movements in reading, reading interests and tastes, and methods of reading instruction - but we don't know much about what reading does to people. 76

Much research has been done since then in an attempt to find out "what reading does to people". Studies range from empirical  
77  
evaluation of moral dilemmas in children's literature to an  
78  
in-depth case study of one pupil's response to literature.

Although these studies have certainly filled in the gaps in Russell's "map", the choice of direction in terms of methodology has not been facilitated for the researcher because of the vastness of the field of study and the variety of disciplinary approaches.

The emergence of the discipline of reader response theory indicates an attempt on the part of researchers who wish to take the role of the reader seriously to determine a fairly cohesive approach to this aspect of literary research. A subtle distinction is evident - it is not so much what reading does to people that is important but what people do to reading.

Cooper, in a brief review of research on the response of readers to literature indicates that research in educational and psychological fields (e.g. that of Russell) considerably predates the interests of literary theorists in reader response theory. Whereas what he terms a major revolution in reading theory was already under way in the 1960s, the revolution in literary theory and criticism did not occur until the early 1970s.<sup>79</sup> Reader response theory involves a major shift in emphasis from an objective evaluation of the text to the role of the reader in literary criticism. Cooper regards it as more than just a shift in theoretical perspective; he sees it as "a new view of the moral values of literature, a new reason for reading literature."<sup>80</sup>

Because children's responses to stories form an important part of this study, it is necessary to examine the views of reader response theorists to ascertain whether their contributions to literary theory can be applied to this research.

Reader response theories of the most radical type shift the



emphasis entirely from the text to the reader. Holland quotes Bleich's argument that only by analysing what readers find in the text can one come to understand it.<sup>81</sup> Holland's own trans-active model of response also emphasizes the reader's (or, to use his term, the literent's) role and stresses that the literent determines the story by controlling the text.<sup>82</sup> He makes a valid point in suggesting that the response is determined by the experiences which the reader brings to the text,<sup>83</sup> but the role of the text appears to be totally passive as it is transformed by the reader into a new experience. Thus the role of the text is minimized.

A theory which seems to be more realistic in its recognition of the integrative nature of the components of the literary process is that of Purves. He sees the need for a comprehensive theory of response to literature.

Such a theory needs to be respectful to theories of criticism and of literature as well as to the practice of readers and critics. As we shall see, this theory must account for the elements common to the responses of large groups as well as for individual differences. It does so primarily by taking as its very premise that a large number of readers share a response and that at the same time no two responses are alike.<sup>84</sup>

85

Purves uses Fish's idea of communities of readers<sup>85</sup> to explain the distinction which he (Purves) makes between meaning and significance. "Meaning might be defined as the large interpretive community - educated users of the language. Significance might be defined as the small interpretive community."<sup>86</sup> The constructs of meaning and significance are central to his model of literary understanding and are created by the interrelationships of writer, text and reader which

constitute the model. Figure 2 indicates the relationships.

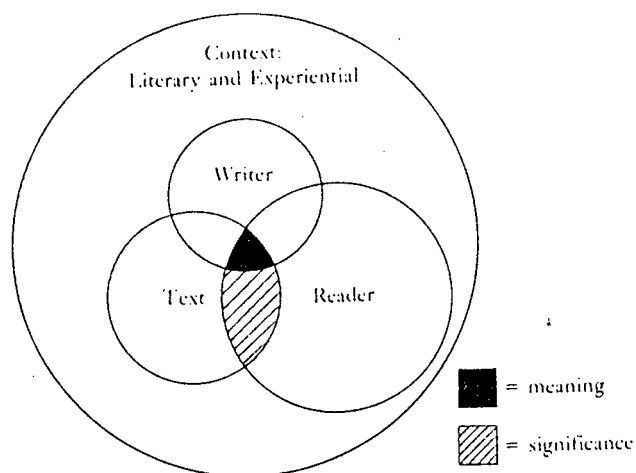


Figure 2. A model of literary understanding

The writer is not excluded because "the writer inhabits a world<sup>88</sup> and, in the writing, expresses the experience of it." Purves continues, "When people read they seek to ascertain meaning which is guided by their belief in the intentionality of the writer<sup>89</sup> and they find significance ...". He points out that meaning is shared with other readers and the writer whereas significance is personal. He adds another element to this model - the audience to whom the response is directed. Figure 3 shows the augmented<sup>90</sup> model.

By introducing the idea of audience, what Purves calls "the culture of the reader, or the reader's community",<sup>91</sup> he addresses the important aspect of the context in which a response is made. (He points out that he might say quite different things about a poem to his wife and to a graduate seminar.) When readers are bound by a single culture they are able to share significances as well as meanings.

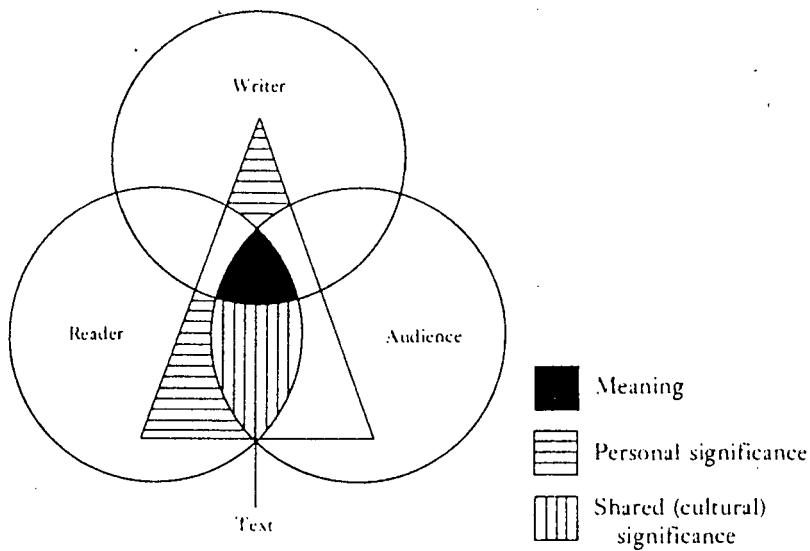


Figure 3. An augmented model of literary understanding

The interrelationship of reader, writer, text and audience gives a perspective to the analysis of responses to literature which radical response theorists ignore. Reading is an integrated process and therefore response to reading should be viewed integratively in order to avoid the situation in which the relevant shift in emphasis from a narrow and rigid text-orientated approach to a reader response orientation, instead of creating a more balanced approach, may create an equally narrow and rigid discipline.

The components of writer, text, reader and audience form an integral part of my approach to analysis of children's responses. Because the responses arise from two age-groups (6- to 8-year-olds and 11- to 13-year-olds) the attention given to each component differs slightly according to group emphasis. The younger children, for example, do not have a conscious understanding of the writer of a story because they are not as concerned with who

wrote it as they are with the story itself. The writer can be understood in terms of "the person who is giving me this story" and therefore meaning can be achieved in that relationship. The writer has more relevance for the older group because they are beginning to develop the ability to group literature (e.g. "I like school stories" or "I don't like adventure stories") and in seeking certain types of literature they become aware that certain authors write the sort of stories they enjoy.

The textual component is of obvious importance and relevance to this study because each text has been specifically selected in order to present certain content matter to the reader (or, in the case of the younger group, the listener). The text cannot be allocated a passive role because it is the selected stimulus for response of a moral nature. The text is not presumed to elicit precisely similar responses and therefore its interrelationship with the reader is important.

The reader's role in interpreting the text is of self-evident relevance, and Purves' distinction between meaning and significance explains to a certain extent the similarities and differences in responses. Because much of the analysis deals with personal interpretation the responses fall largely into the significance category.

The fourth component, audience, is particularly relevant, both in the idea of the cultural audience from which the reader comes and in its narrower interpretation of the audience (or context) in which the response is delivered. Although Purves refers to a cultural audience, it is evident that readers are part of a moral audience as well. In its contextual sense, audience is important

in this study because every response is made from a child to an adult and however much a child may be encouraged to give his or her own opinion, it will almost inevitably be a different response to one which may be made on the playground when the audience is the child's peer group.

Purves's model provides an outline for research in which the reader's response can be evaluated in relationship to the concepts which influence that response. Because of the interactive nature of these concepts, analysis of response in this study does not involve a detailed working through of each component; they are dealt with comprehensively in the integral role they play in the response (i.e. responses are not analysed under the headings text, writer, reader, audience although discussion includes consideration of these concepts).

Whereas Purves provides a model which outlines components of response, Harding suggests three categories of response. These are the reader's empathy with the characters, his or her evaluation of the characters' behaviour, and acceptance or rejection of the values conveyed by the author.<sup>92</sup> These categories involve Purves's components, but give them a personal dimension, and therefore questions directed at respondents are loosely structured around these three categories.

### CHAPTER 3. THE REALM OF FAERIE AND LESSONS WELL LEARNT:

#### ANALYSIS OF THE LITERATURE & RESPONSES OF THE YOUNGER GROUP

##### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The following stories were chosen for the 6- to 8-year old group: three fairy tales, "The King of Colchester's daughters", <sup>1</sup> Oscar Wilde's "The selfish giant" <sup>2</sup> and Hans Christian Andersen's "The wild swans"; <sup>3</sup> a story by George MacDonald, "A Scot's Christmas story"; <sup>4</sup> the chapter "In which Tigger is unbounced" <sup>5</sup> from A. A. Milne's The House at Pooh Corner; and an Enid Blyton story, "The forgotten rabbits". <sup>6</sup>

All the stories deal with the theme of good versus evil in that they relate situations involving interaction between "good" and "bad" characters, but they explore the relationship on different levels, ranging from a spiritual understanding of suffering and sacrifice to the most basic understanding of good and bad behaviour and their resultant reward or punishment. The stories are analysed individually below, but identification of common motifs provides a more coherent picture of their relationship to each other.

In five of the six stories some kind of reform of a "bad" character is effected (and in the sixth the evil is overcome although the character who imposed it is ignored, i.e. not punished), so that each story in its own way reinforces the idea that good behaviour is the ideal and confirms the supremacy of good over evil (although some make the point more directly

than others). The manner in which reform is effected differs widely. In two stories there is a clear intention on the part of "good" characters to reform "bad" characters by "teaching them a lesson", whereas the other characters reform as a result of (i) recognition of the bad effects which their behaviour brings about; (ii) contact with one (or more) good character(s); or (iii) a combination of both.

Related to the concept of reform is the question of punishment, and the mode of reform is seen to affect the role of punishment. (Piaget's observations on children's understanding of the relationship between punishment and justice are relevant here, and are referred to later in greater detail.) Where reform is not consciously practised on a character (i.e. the lesson is learnt without having been taught) the question of punishment does not arise except in the form of "self-imposed" punishment (i.e. misfortune which is brought about by one's own bad deeds, as in (i) above). This is related to what Piaget terms immanent justice - the child's belief that a bad action will inevitably have an unfortunate consequence, e.g. a child who stole apples fell into a stream while crossing an old bridge - many young children considered this to be a direct result of the apple theft.<sup>7</sup> When there is a conscious intention on the part of a character to teach another a lesson, however, some form of punishment is usually devised even though it may not be personally imposed. The relationship of punishment to the child's understanding of morality is an important central theme which is investigated in this age group.

Other common elements which occur in the selected stories are

jealousy displayed towards a "good" character by a "bad" one (2 stories), a journey or quest in order to accomplish good (3 stories), and suffering of innocent characters (5 stories) which in some cases (3) is essential to the accomplishment of good, and in fact amounts to a form of sacrifice. These elements are discussed in detail as each story is analysed, but awareness of the similarities and differences in the portrayal of common themes is important for the assessment of children's responses to the different portrayals.

I have avoided a blanket categorization of the stories into fantasy and moralistic divisions as all the stories effectively contain an element of fantasy and, as I have already suggested, the categories of fantasy and moralism are not mutually exclusive. Moralistic characteristics are therefore discussed within the context of each story. The children are encouraged to make moral judgements on two levels. They are asked for their opinions about the characters in the story (Who did you like most? What did you dislike? Why?) and are also prompted to consider the characters' own reasons for particular behaviour in an attempt to evaluate whether they are able to understand or relate to the type of moral reasoning displayed by the character (Why do you think the wicked queen did that?). They are also encouraged to relate the situation to their own experience, where appropriate, so that contextual elements come into play.

Fairy tales were included in this research because they are a form of literature with which most children are familiar. Although fairy tales originated as adult literature and have been considered specifically suitable for children since the



eighteenth century only,<sup>8</sup> several researchers have indicated that children relate well to fairy tales at approximately 7 years of age.<sup>9</sup> The fact that fairy tales were originally told to adults raises the question of meaning. Should fairy tales be told to children if they cannot fully comprehend the meaning behind the seemingly simple story? The answer from a number of writers on the subject is overwhelmingly in the affirmative, primarily because of the effect that fairy tales are thought to have on the unconscious.

Because children are familiar with the format and style of fairy tales they develop certain expectations which, once fulfilled, produce an atmosphere of security - even though the situations described in the stories may place characters in insecure positions, the children are sufficiently distanced from the danger and therefore do not feel threatened.<sup>10</sup> They expect good characters to encounter bad characters and they anticipate a happy ending in which good will triumph. They therefore catch a glimpse of the uncertainties of life, but from a safe distance because they do not consciously make the connection between the story and their own lives. Their conscious minds follow the story while the unconscious is "nourished"<sup>11</sup> by its symbolic meaning. Susan Cooper claims that young children are able to respond naturally to archetypes and myth in fairy tales because they are closer to the unconscious than they will ever be again.<sup>12</sup> The question of how much they understand of the symbolic meaning is therefore unimportant as any interpretation of a story, whether by adult or child, will contain an element of subjectivity. Bettelheim states that "each story has meanings on too many levels"<sup>13</sup> and therefore different aspects will be relevant to

children at different levels of development. George MacDonald sees no need to explain meanings to children as they "find what<sup>14</sup> they are capable of finding, and more would be too much."

Bettelheim also warns against didactically telling a child what a story means.

Only when discovery of the previously hidden meanings of a fairy tale is the child's spontaneous intuitive achievement does it attain full significance for him. This discovery changes a story from something the child is being given into something he partially creates for himself.<sup>15</sup>

This independent discovery is particularly relevant when a fairy tale has religious significance. If the meaning is spelt out it may then be acknowledged by the child as something to be remembered but may never be felt to be real. Jung postulates that an archetypal image is not only a thought pattern but also an emotional experience<sup>16</sup> (and therefore an individual experience), and so the child should be free to respond emotionally to archetypes in a story at whatever level he or she is capable of responding without having that feeling stifled by being given the "right" explanation. Bettelheim stresses the role of good and evil:

In practically every fairy tale good and evil are given body in the form of some figures and their actions, as good and evil are omnipresent in life and the propensities for both are present in every man. It is this duality which poses the moral problem, and requires the struggle to solve it.<sup>17</sup>

This struggle between good and evil has contributed to the idea<sup>18</sup> that fairy tales have "an altogether religious world view", but Higgins points out that this does not mean that fairy tales are religious stories but "stories that do possess a distinct religious quality."<sup>19</sup> Elaboration of this quality should not be

attempted, especially not to children, as the implicit morality of the fairy tale may during the process of explanation be transformed into explicit moralism and the mythopoeic essence of the fairy story may be destroyed. It is the discovery of the relationship between good and evil that is important, at whatever level of understanding the child experiences it, rather than recognition of the explanation of the presence of good and evil.

### 3.2 THE KING OF COLCHESTER'S DAUGHTERS

The kind, sweet-natured and beautiful daughter is alienated from her father by the devices of her jealous stepmother and envious, ill-natured, ugly stepsister. She decides to go and seek her fortune and is given some brown bread, hard cheese and a bottle of beer. She meets an old man, shares her provisions with him and is given a wand to enable her to pass through a thorny hedge. She comes to a well where a golden head pops up and asks to be washed, combed and put on the bank. She does this, and two more heads pop up requesting the same thing. They decide to give her the following gifts: (i) addition to her beauty, (ii) sweet perfume in body and breath; and (iii) the good fortune to marry a great king. She continues her journey, meets the king who falls in love with her and is taken back to visit her father.

The second daughter is most envious and decides that she too will seek her fortune. She is given rich foods and a large bottle of Malaga Sack, and sets off along the same road taken by her sister. She meets the old man, but refuses to share her food and is caught by the thorns when she tries to get through the hedge. She goes to the well to wash her wounds, but when asked by the

heads to wash and comb them, she hits them with her bottle. Because of this treatment they give her: (i) leprosy on her face; (ii) an additional stink to her breath; and (iii) a poor country cobbler for a husband. She continues her journey, but everyone runs from her except a cobbler who has medicine to cure her and agrees to do so if she will marry him. They return to the court where her mother is so enraged at the match that she drops dead, and the king gives them a hundred pounds on condition that they leave the court.

The story presents a relatively straightforward treatment of good and evil as the relationship is a simple causal one: good behaviour is rewarded with good fortune and bad behaviour results in bad fortune. The story links the behaviour of the girls to their outward appearance and it is interesting to note whether the children regard the connection as tenuous or not. Without exception all children agreed that the second princess deserved to be punished.

Group : I thought it was right that she got leprosy because she was horrible.  
 : I thought she deserved it because she threw the bottle on the man's head.  
 : And she wouldn't give the man food.

Interviewer : Was it fair that the second girl had leprosy on her face and got smelly breath?

Both : Yes.

Interviewer : Why?

Marche' : Because she did something nasty.

Dane : She did something bad so she doesn't get a reward, she gets a reward of horribleness.

Robin : I think it was right that she got pricked by the thorn bush because she was cruel.

David : I think it was right that she married an old cobbler and it was right that she got the leprosy.

Interviewer : And why do you think that it was such a bad thing for her to marry a cobbler?

David : Well, it served her right.  
 Interviewer : And what was wrong with marrying a cobbler?  
 (Pause.) What did she want at first?  
 Robin : She wanted to get her fortune like her sister.  
 Interviewer : Why did her sister get good fortune?  
 Robin : I don't know.  
 Interviewer : What did she do when she met the heads?  
 Robin : She done what they asked her to and she wasn't  
 cruel.  
 David : And she gave the old man food.  
 Interviewer : So the first sister married a king but the  
 second married a cobbler and you say she  
 deserved this. Why?  
 David : She ... she was cruel and she should find out  
 what life is like when you become cruel.

Although the children accept that marrying a cobbler is a form of punishment, they are unable to give reasons as to why it is bad, except for a vague understanding that the cobbler is not socially acceptable in the queen's view. (Dane: I've got a feeling she [the queen] didn't actually like the cobbler, because he was just an old man and it [he] mends shoes. Ephesa: She wanted her daughter to marry a rich prince.) The portrayal of the relationship between beauty and good behaviour and ugliness and bad behaviour is one that may be criticized by those who feel that these stereotypes may be reinforced in the minds of children. Although some children do make a concrete connection between outward appearance and behaviour, there is recognition that outward appearance does not excuse (or necessarily cause) bad behaviour.

Group : Because she's so ugly, she's also so spiteful.  
 Interviewer : So do you think she was spiteful because she was so ugly?  
 : Yes.  
 Interviewer : Would she be different if she'd been beautiful?  
 : Yes.  
 : No. Because she was jealous of her sister.  
 : It was in her insides so she wouldn't change.  
 Her insides were all horrible.  
 Interviewer : How do you think she got horrible inside?  
 : She was probably born like that.  
 Interviewer : But if she was born like that do you think she could help being horrible?  
 : No.

- Interviewer : The story mentions that one sister was pretty and the other was ugly - does that make a difference?
- Marche' : Yes.
- Interviewer : So do you think all ugly people behave in a bad way?
- Both : Yes.
- Interviewer : Do they always do that?
- Both : Yes.
- Interviewer : But if they can't help being ugly because they're born that way, should they be punished if they do wrong?
- Marche' : Yes, because it's not right to steal or be nasty.
- Interviewer : Do you think being ugly on the outside makes you ugly inside?
- Marche' : No, there's quite a difference inside and outside.
- Interviewer : So you think they could still be good people inside even though they're ugly outside?
- Marche' : Yes.
- Interviewer : Is it easier to be good if you're pretty?
- Marche' : Yes.
- Dane : You should actually be good always even if you looked ugly.
- Marche' : Or terrible, you must.
- Interviewer : Do you think if someone is ugly that makes her behaviour different?
- David : No, you can be ugly and still good, like Mother Frost in "Briar Rose". She was ugly, but she was good.

There seems to be a progression in the types of reasoning used by the three groups of children. In the first group a child sees a clear connection between ugliness and spiteful behaviour, and although another recognizes that outward appearance would not change the princess's insides, she concludes that the girl is not responsible for her horrible insides as "she was probably born like that." Punishment for bad behaviour is therefore related to the bad action itself (all agreed that she deserved punishment) and not to whatever causes the bad behaviour. Marche' and Dane at first see a connection between ugliness and bad behaviour but agree that it is not an excuse which exempts the person from punishment. Marche' shows some confusion because she concedes

that ugly people can be good people inside, but still thinks that it is easier to be good if one is pretty. This confusion seems to be the result of a desire to respond "correctly" to my questions, a problem which arises inevitably when the children need to be prompted to consider a particular aspect of the situation. Although the prompting is not intended to introduce the "right" way of looking at a problem, the child may instinctively assume that the change of emphasis, especially when suggested by an implicitly authoritarian figure, the interviewer, points towards the "right" answer.

The third viewpoint, David's, shows that he has a clear conception of the way the relationship between ugliness and bad behaviour is used in the story, but he does not fall prey to the same reasoning as Marche'. He unequivocally rejects the interviewer's suggestion and even introduces an example from another story to support his opinion. The children display an understanding and approval of what Piaget would term expiatory punishment<sup>20</sup> and also seem to adhere to the belief that the more severe the punishment the better.

Interviewer : You think you should be punished for doing something wrong?

Both : Yes.

Marche' : Like this girl was punished by getting this on her skin and breath.

Interviewer : So do you think that if they'd just spoken to her, it would've helped?

Marche' : No.

: So she needed actually to be punished?

Both : Yes.

Marche' : If I was that head I would just take a bottle and hit her.

Dane : Yes, she should be bashed on the head before she could hit the heads.

Whereas Marche' and Dane suggest reciprocal punishment (punish-

ment to fit the crime), David's punishment is of an arbitrary nature and he is quite happy to abandon it for the expedience of magic.

- Interviewer : Do you think the heads could have done anything else to make her change?  
 David : They could have made her fall into a pit of mud.  
 Robin : And they could make her all messy.  
 Interviewer : Do you think if they just talked to her she would've changed?  
 David : Yes.  
 Robin : No.  
 David : Yes, because they were magic heads.  
 Interviewer : So if they just said, "Be a good girl," she would be good?  
 David : They would say, "Don't be naughty and be kind and don't be selfish," and she'd be good.  
 Interviewer : Do you think that would've been better?  
 David : Yes, much better.  
 Interviewer : Would she have learnt anything herself if they just said she must be good?  
 David : No, not really, but she'd still be a good girl.

Thus, in David's opinion the result is most important and he resorts to egocentric reasoning - it is easier to become good by magic means than to be painfully reformed. The efficiency of punishment in effecting reform is recognized, however.

- Interviewer : Do you think she learnt anything from what happened to her?  
 Ephesa : Yes, she learnt a lesson because she was mean to the heads. She got leprosy and her breath smelled.  
 Interviewer : What did she learn from that?  
 Ephesa : (Pause.) Ask Alex.  
 Alexandra : Not to be so horrible.

- Interviewer : Did she change at the end?  
 Marche' : Yes.  
 Interviewer : Why?  
 Marche' : Because she got leprosy on her face and smelly breath.  
 Interviewer : And do you think she would still have changed if something else had happened to her that wasn't so bad?  
 Marche' : No.



- Dane : I don't know.
- Interviewer : Do you think she would be different when she was married to the cobbler?
- David : I think she would be much different. I think she would've learnt her lesson and she would know what it's like to be all kind of hurt.
- Interviewer : And if she ever met an old man again, what would she do?
- Robin : I think she would give him food because she doesn't like the cruel things they gave her and she even feels sorry that she did that.

The story presents a seemingly simple exposition of good and bad behaviour, with clear parallels of opportunity (both girls meet the old man and the heads) and parallels in reward and punishment (both deal with appearance, breath and marriage), but it provides the reader with the opportunity to reason on different levels.

The question of punishment can be understood as "right" or "deserved" in "obedience/punishment" type reasoning,<sup>21</sup> i.e. punishment is a natural consequence of bad behaviour because it offends or angers those in authority. When children begin to understand reciprocity, the "fairness" or "fitness" of the punishment becomes important, but it is often still understood in authoritarian terms. Finally when children see the need for co-operation (Kohlberg's mutual interpersonal relationships stage) punishment is viewed as an agent of reform, i.e. it causes a change in the character's behaviour. This moral change can be understood to have occurred as a result of a combination of factors as illustrated by Robin's reasoning that the second girl would give the old man food if she ever met him again "because she doesn't like the cruel things they gave her" (basic understanding of avoidance of punishment), "and she even feels sorry that she did that." (This shows the beginning of an understanding of co-operation, a consideration of the other person's point of view.)

### 3.3 THE SELFISH GIANT. OSCAR WILDE

When the giant returns to his castle after 7 years and finds children playing in his garden, he chases them away and builds a high wall to keep them out. Because of this, spring never comes to his garden and he lives in a constant state of winter until one day the children creep through a hole in the wall and the garden comes alive again. When the giant sees a little boy crying because he cannot get into a tree, he realizes how selfish he has been and goes to help him. The boy kisses him. He knocks down the wall and the children return to play there every day, but the giant does not see the little boy again for many years. When he does return one winter the giant sees a tree blossoming in the corner of the garden. The little boy has nail prints in his hands and feet which he says are "the wounds of Love" (p. 37). The giant's first reaction is anger that anyone could do this, and then he kneels before him. The child says, "You let me play once in your garden, today you shall come with me to my garden, which is Paradise."

And when the children ran in that afternoon, they found the Giant lying dead under the tree, all covered with white blossoms. (p. 37)

Because Oscar Wilde does not attempt to imitate traditional fairy stories and his stories do not have the conventional happy ending they are regarded by some as unsuitable for children.<sup>22</sup>

It is interesting to note, however, that all the children to whom I read this story seemed to enjoy it. It is a story which obviously requires a certain amount of background knowledge if the symbolism is to be understood, but if George MacDonald's comment that children "find what they are capable of" is<sup>23</sup>

accepted then it is clear that children need not be told that the little boy is "meant" to symbolize Jesus. Some recognize the symbolism and others do not, but they all understand the symbolism of the spring and winter images, though some tend to view the change as a somewhat mechanistic, cause-and-effect process. This understanding is linked to their understanding of the giant's change of heart upon which rests the central conception of the way in which good and evil operate in the story.

- Interviewer : What made him change?  
 Christopher : Because the children came into the garden.  
 Interviewer : And why did that make him change?  
 Christopher : Because it was spring.  
 Interviewer : Why didn't he chase the children away again?  
 Christopher : Because he wanted it to stay spring.  
 Interviewer : And why do you think it had been winter when the children weren't there?  
 Christopher : Because he was unkind.  
 Interviewer : What did the spring feel when he was unkind?  
 Christopher : (Pause) It made him kinder again.  
 Interviewer : When he saw the spring he became kinder, so what do you think really made him change?  
 Christopher : The spring.  
 Heidi : The bird, he heard the bird.

Although Christopher originally mentions the children as the agent of change in the giant's attitude and recognizes that the giant's unkindness was the reason for the wintry weather, he is unable to explain why the change occurs and therefore concludes that the spring caused the change in the giant.

- Interviewer : Why was the garden always wintry after he built the wall?  
 Mohammed : Because he wouldn't let the children in, but the spring only came when he knocked down the wall with the axe when the children came in.  
 Evan : I liked it when the giant chopped down the wall.  
 Interviewer : Why do you think the spring stayed away when the children weren't there?  
 Evan : Because the spring liked the children and the flowers liked the children and the trees.  
 Interviewer : And did they like the giant?

Evan : No.  
 Interviewer : Why not?  
 Mohammed : Because he was selfish.

The weather changes are initially seen to be connected to the children's presence, but after prompting the further connection between the children's absence and the giant's selfishness is made. The reason for his allowing the children back into the garden is viewed primarily as an egocentric desire to have spring in his garden.

Interviewer : What do you think made him change?  
 Group : He knew that the spring wouldn't come.  
           If the children weren't there, there wouldn't be spring.  
 Interviewer : Why do you think the giant decided to let the children stay in the garden?  
 Mohammed : Because then [i.e. otherwise] the spring won't come and he won't get good air, so that's why he let them stay.  
 Evan : Because he wanted the flowers and then he wouldn't have trees.  
 Interviewer : So he wanted his garden to be beautiful?  
 Evan : Yes.

As well as the understanding of individual instrumental purpose and exchange reasoning (if I do this for someone else it will benefit me), some children recognize that the little boy is instrumental in changing the giant's attitude, but they have difficulty in articulating their feelings about how he helps the giant or why they feel that he does. This seems to be an instance in which their emotional response cannot be translated into cognitive reasoning. There is a "feeling" which cannot be explained and is very probably not fully understood, but this does not invalidate its value as a genuine response to the story.

Interviewer : Why was the garden always wintry when the children weren't there?  
 Victoria : Because if the children came in the flowers would start to bloom because Jesus was there and he would make the flowers bloom.

- Interviewer : Do you think that made any difference to the giant?  
 Victoria : Yes, it made a big difference because it was cold and then suddenly came spring and all the children.

Victoria introduces the idea that Jesus causes the flowers to bloom, but when prompted to connect this to the giant's behaviour she resorts to a literal interpretation of the difference in weather. When Tina is struggling to express her feelings about why the little boy is important, however, Victoria is able to come to the rescue with a reason and a fairly complex justification of her reason.

- Tina : I liked the part when the giant let them play in the garden.  
 Interviewer : Why?  
 Tina : Because he once was horrible and I liked the part when he was nice.  
 Interviewer : Why do you think he changed?  
 Tina : Because the boy was crying.  
 Interviewer : So if he'd still been selfish what do you think he would have done?  
 Tina : He would of ... done ... (long pause).  
 Interviewer : Would he just have gone away?  
 Tina : Ja.  
 Interviewer : So why do you think the fact that he was crying made him change?  
 Tina : 'Cos he couldn't get up the tree.  
 Interviewer : Yes, he couldn't get up the tree and the giant helped him. Why did the giant help him?  
 Tina : Because, um ... he was ... just crying.  
 Interviewer : Why do you think he decided to let the children stay after the little boy had gone?  
 Tina : Because ... well, you see, the boy kissed him.  
 Interviewer : So you think that changed him inside? [This is admittedly a "leading" question, but it is used in an attempt to stimulate thinking.]  
 Tina : Er ... yes.  
 Interviewer : How do you think he changed inside?  
 Victoria : Because Jesus had kissed him and when Jesus kisses things that haven't been nice for a long time they become good.  
 Interviewer : So you think it was because it was Jesus and not just any little boy?  
 Victoria : Yes.

Victoria is evidently fairly knowledgeable about the Christian gospel, (as she answers a question about the meaning of "the wounds of love": That means he died on the cross for the giant) but seems to be able to use her knowledge interpretatively. (This is evident in her replies below as well.)

More children than usual could not give a reason for the part they liked best. Often a circular reason is given (Why did you like that? It's nice.) when children are unable to evaluate reasons,<sup>24</sup> but the children who could not explain why, did not make use of circular (and therefore egocentric) reasoning because the elements that appealed to them were not egocentric in nature.

Group 1 : I liked it when the little boy went to  
paradise.  
Interviewer : Why?  
: I don't know.  
Group 2 : I liked it when he showed the wounds on his  
hands.  
Interviewer : Why did you like that part?  
: I don't know.

Christopher : I liked it when the little boy took the giant  
to paradise.  
Interviewer : Why did you like that?  
Christopher : I'm not sure.  
Interviewer : What did it make you feel like when I read  
that part?  
Christopher : I didn't have any feeling.

Their inability to explain in simple terms why they liked these parts appears paradoxically to be an indication of a deeper understanding of the sacrificial element of the story, although they seem to sense rather than "understand" its significance. Not all the children see the symbolic connection between the little boy and Jesus, however, but every group contained some who did make the connection.

- Group : I liked it when the giant ran down the stairs to Jesus (laughter from some of the others.) It was Jesus.
- Interviewer : Why do you think it was Jesus?
- Group : Because he had holes in his hand and feet from being on the cross.
- : Because he took the giant to heaven.

The giant's being taken to paradise raises the question of whether his death is seen as reward or punishment and whether the reciprocity contained in "You let me play once in your garden, today you shall come with me to my garden, which is Paradise" is understood in literal terms (i.e. because the giant let him play there once) or in a more general sense (i.e. because the giant is no longer selfish).

- Mohammed : I didn't like it when the giant got melted. [Mohammed shows confusion with the concept of the giant's heart melting. Earlier he calls the giant a dragon and says he likes it when the giant was melted, but changes his mind.]
- Interviewer : You mean when he died under the tree?
- Mohammed : Yes.
- Evan : I also didn't like that because it's sad because he started to be good.
- Mohammed : Yes, it's sad because he was very nice.
- Interviewer : What did you think of the little boy?
- Mohammed : I think he was good because he kissed the giant.
- Interviewer : Why did he say that about taking him to heaven?
- Mohammed : Because the boy had to go to heaven and he wanted to take the giant because, because the giant let him see the garden so he wanted to let him see his garden.
- Evan : I liked it when the children climbed through the hole in the wall.
- Interviewer : Why did he come to fetch him?
- Evan : Because he was all covered in flowers.
- Interviewer : Yes, he first spoke to him and then he was covered in flowers, but why did he fetch him?
- Evan : Because he let him play in his garden and was nice to him.

Although the fact that the little boy fetches the giant is seen to be a result of his kindness towards the little boy, there is a sense of unfairness that the giant should die "because he started

to be good". The reward of heaven does not quite outweigh the feeling of sadness that the giant is dead. Other responses are more pragmatic:

Interviewer : Why do you think the boy came to fetch him?  
 Group 1 : Because he was old and he had to come to heaven.  
 Group 2 : Because he was old and he needed to die.  
 : It was time to die because he was old.  
 Group 3 : Because he was kind afterwards.  
 Christopher : Because he'd done something for him.

The giant's death is regarded as "fair" because of his age, and regarded as a reward in reciprocal terms.

Two responses which illustrate emotional involvement and interesting reasoning on the reconciliation of the sadness and the "good feeling" experienced are responses originally offered as answers to the question: What part of the story did you like most?

Group (Duncan): I liked it when he asks the little boy Jesus who had hurt him.  
 Interviewer : Why?  
 : Because he says, "come to my place, Paradise" and he's just dead.  
 Interviewer : You liked that?  
 : Yes.  
 Interviewer : Did you think it was happy or sad?  
 : No, I thought it was sad, but I thought it was nice too when he tells him to come there.

Victoria : I liked the part when he was all covered in blossoms and he was going to paradise.  
 Interviewer : Why?  
 Victoria : Because it felt like flowers and I could kind of feel the flowers.  
 Interviewer : Were you sad that he was dead?  
 Victoria : Well, he had to die because he was very old, well, I was a little bit sad.  
 Interviewer : Why weren't you very sad?  
 Victoria : Because once he was very selfish and then he wasn't when he died.  
 Interviewer : You were glad he'd changed before he died?  
 Victoria : Yes.



This type of reasoning cannot be slotted into a moral development category or stage of reasoning because of its essentially emotional nature. It is a response to the feeling which the story evokes which cannot be rationalized. The children may be puzzled and may not understand why they like something which is sad, but their response is to the inherent "rightness" of the end of the story which seems to be a deeper appreciation of the relationship between the little boy and the giant than a purely reciprocal one. (I specifically use the words "deeper appreciation" rather than what Kohlberg would term a "higher stage of reasoning" because it is the emotive response to the spiritual aspects of the story that is more advanced in Duncan and Victoria and not their moral/religious reasoning).

It is difficult to assess "The Selfish Giant" in terms of its ability to stimulate moral thinking, therefore, as the "best" response from children transcends formal reasoning. That children respond to different aspects of the story with various types of reasoning is illustrated by the variety of responses analysed, but they all seem to grasp something of the basic understanding of good and evil evident in the change in the giant's behaviour, whether they view the change as occurring as a result of an egocentric desire for the return of spring or a spiritual encounter. Evaluation of the spiritual response is also difficult because it is sensed rather than understood, but it seems reasonable to assume that the story presents a situation which allows children some perception of spiritual concepts like sacrifice, forgiveness, death and life after death, even though they may not be able to express their feelings.

### 3.4 THE WILD SWANS. HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN

Elisa and her eleven brothers are disliked by their jealous stepmother. She sends the brothers away and makes Elisa appear ugly and dirty so that her father rejects her as well. She leaves the palace to search for her brothers and after praying that she will find them, she dreams that the tree under which she is sleeping is surrounded by angels. She discovers that the queen has turned her brothers into swans and that they can only resume human form at night. They decide to take her with them to their new home across the sea, and leave her to rest in a green cavern. She prays that she may be guided to help them and dreams of how she can free them from the queen's spell. A fairy tells her that she has to weave eleven shirts, making flax from stinging nettles, but she may not speak until the task is complete. She begins the next morning, but cannot tell her brothers what she is doing. A king discovers the cavern and takes her to his palace because he wants to marry her, but because she does not speak and appears to be unhappy, he allows her to continue her spinning and weaving. When she needs more nettles she goes to the churchyard to pick some, but is seen by the archbishop who accuses her of being a sorceress. The king reluctantly decides that the people must judge her. They decide that she must be burnt at the stake. As the cart approaches the stake the eleven swans perch on its side. She throws the shirts onto them, they turn back into princes and explain that she is innocent.

The story introduces a new perspective on good and evil because it does not follow the formula of good being rewarded and evil being punished. The wicked queen is not mentioned again after

she ill-treats Elisa, and therefore this is the only story in the section in which justice is not done and the bad character does not undergo a process of reform. Although good ultimately triumphs, Elisa, the innocent sister who has done no one any harm, has to undergo great suffering in order to free her brothers from the spell. Children are presented with the idea that sacrifice and suffering on the part of innocent people are sometimes necessary for good to be accomplished.

Because evil goes unpunished in this story, the questions about evil tend to be centred on evaluation of motivation for doing evil and the possibility of reform. There seems to be no clear conception as to why anybody should want to do what the queen did, and answers tend to reflect what she did rather than why.

- Simon : I didn't like the bad queen.  
 Interviewer : Why not?  
 Simon : Because she was evil.  
 Interviewer : Why do you think she behaved the way she did?  
 Simon : Because she was jealous of the princess's beauty.  
 Interviewer : Do you think that was a good reason to do what she did?  
 Simon : No, it was bad.
- Interviewer : Why didn't you like the queen?  
 Himmel : She was so wicked and she cast the spell that they were ... all the eleven brothers turned into swans.  
 Interviewer : Why do you think she was wicked?  
 Himmel : Because of that horrible things.  
 Interviewer : What do you think made her do such horrible things?  
 Himmel : Maybe she was a witch. No ordinary guy can do a spell, only a witch.

Himmel first uses circular reasoning (the queen is wicked because she does horrible things), and then settles for a reason which does not require evaluation of motivation (the queen must be a witch, therefore she is wicked). The fact that witches are wicked

is accepted and the question as to why they are wicked does not arise. Katrien and Gareth also have difficulty in explaining why the queen behaves as she does.

- Gareth : I didn't like the queen because she was very unkind because when they were playing "chaff chaff" games they "chaffed" that people came to visit and the queen just gave them sand in a little bowl and said they must pretend to eat that.
- Interviewer : Why do you think she did that?
- Gareth : Because she was very horrible to the children and she didn't like them.
- Interviewer : What do you think made her be horrible to them? (Long pause.) It doesn't say in the story, but can you think of any reason why she should be like that?
- Katrien : She worked for the devil.
- Interviewer : You think she worked for the devil? Why did she do that?
- Gareth : Because the devil would've sat on her shoulder and when the angel came to chase the devil away the devil would've just chased the angel away.
- Interviewer : So you think she just listened to what the devil was telling her all the time?
- Both : Yes.

Once again the reason is non-evaluative. She is wicked because she works for the devil, but why she should want to work for the devil is not considered. Her evil behaviour is therefore apparently inevitable.

No change in her behaviour is mentioned in the story and questions about whether she might change indicate that it is considered unlikely.

- Interviewer : Do you think that the horrible mother would ever change?
- Simon : No.
- Stephanie : Maybe.
- Interviewer : And what would make someone change if she was horrible?
- Simon : Well, they want to be good.
- Interviewer : And what would make her want to be good?
- Simon : I don't know.
- Interviewer : Why do you think she did the horrible things?

- Stephanie : She was jealous of the little girl.  
 Interviewer : Do you think if bad people meet good people that they would change?  
 Simon : I don't know, maybe.  
 Stephanie : Maybe.  
 Interviewer : But you think they have to want to change themselves?  
 Both : Yes.  
 Interviewer : So if someone tells you to be good, but you don't feel like being good, you'll still be naughty?  
 Simon : Yes, but that's bad.  
 Interviewer : So you know it's bad, but you'll still be naughty?  
 Simon : Sometimes.
- Interviewer : And do you think that someone who's horrible like the queen will ever change?  
 Gareth : No.  
 Katrien : Maybe.  
 Interviewer : And what do you think would make her change?  
 Katrien : If she tried to chase the devil away.  
 Interviewer : So she would have to decide she wanted to be good herself?  
 Gareth : Like if she's thinking of something bad to do she just wouldn't do it and she'd just think of something better to do.  
 Interviewer : So she'd have to make an effort?  
 Both : Yes.

In attributing the queen's badness to working for the devil, Katrien relieves her of some of the responsibility for her actions, but by suggesting that change is possible if the queen tries "to chase the devil away" she implies that the queen has a choice of whether to be evil or not, so she would have to decide to change. In the context of a story which does not contain a punishment situation, it appears that children do not spontaneously regard punishment as an essential prerequisite for change, but I would hesitate before jumping to the conclusion which in Kohlberg's structure would place them in a category above the obedience/punishment level as it seems likely that the same children might regard punishment as important if the question were discussed.

In their understanding of the sacrifice made by Elisa for her brothers, the children show signs of reciprocal reasoning and an understanding of the importance of mutual interpersonal relationships. Elisa does not undergo suffering because of what she hopes to gain from her brothers but because she loves them, and the inference is that they would have done the same for her. Her sacrifice is seen as necessary although it is not fair.

Interviewer : Was it fair that she had to have all this pain to help her brothers?

Himmel : No, I don't think so.

Interviewer : Why do you think she did it even though it wasn't fair?

Himmel : Because she liked her brothers and she wanted to free them.

Angus : Ja.

Interviewer : What do you think you would've done?

Angus : I would save my brothers.

Interviewer : Even if it was painful?

Angus : Yes.

Himmel : Yes, and I wouldn't even say a word.

Interviewer : Don't you think that was very difficult?

Himmel : Ja.

Interviewer : And how do you think she managed not to say a word?

Himmel : She just kept her mouth like that (pinches lips).

Interviewer : Was it fair that Elisa had to do all these things to save her brothers?

Gareth : Um, yes.

Katrien : Yes and no.

Interviewer : Why do you say that?

Katrien : Yes, because she wanted to help her brothers and no, it's not fair because she didn't cause it and the wicked queen was supposed to ...  
(Pause.)

Interviewer : So does that happen in real life that innocent people have to do things to make up for what evil people do?

Katrien : Yes, the police work very hard to arrest robbers.

Interviewer : And why do you think Elisa had to go through all the pain?

Gareth : To save her brothers and she didn't really care if it was very painful. She just worked harder and harder and didn't care if it was painful; she just wanted to save her brothers.

Interviewer : So you think if you really care about something very hard then you'll do almost anything?

Both : Yes.

Fairness is therefore subjugated to necessity. Elisa did what she did because she had to do it, but when questioned on what they would have done in Elisa's position Katrien and Gareth are unsure. (Katrien: I don't know. Gareth: I don't really know either.) This seems to indicate that although they see the necessity for Elisa's suffering they do not regard it as something which could be lightly undertaken. Simon's answer below implies that Elisa did have a choice even though the consequences of the "wrong" choice were severe.

Interviewer : When Elisa went through all the pain, handling the nettles and spinning, do you think she thought all the suffering was worthwhile?

Simon : Yes.

Interviewer : Why do you think she felt that?

Simon : Because she did it.

Interviewer : So she could've given up? How would she have felt if she'd given up?

Stephanie : Sorry.

Although the story is not overtly religious, it is mentioned that Elisa prays for guidance three times. I did not question the children directly about the prayers as I wanted to establish what their natural (i.e. unprompted) response to this aspect would be. The questions about how she was able to endure the suffering are therefore indirectly aimed at discovering whether her prayers were considered an important factor or not. Only one of the children interviewed and only one group response mention the prayers. The other responses refer to her character.

Interviewer : How do you think she managed to keep going even though it was so difficult?

Katrien : Because she had so much courage and she just kept on trying.

Gareth : And she wanted to help her brothers.  
 Interviewer : So you think because she wanted to help them  
                   it gave her extra strength?  
 Katrien : Yes.  
 Interviewer : And how do you think she managed not to talk?  
 Katrien : Because she kept on trying.

Interviewer : What do you think gave her the courage to help  
                   her brothers?  
 Stephanie : Because she loved them very much.  
 Simon : And she was determined.  
 Interviewer : Do you think that being determined can help  
                   you to do difficult things?  
 Simon : Yes.

She is seen to be helped by her own goodness, an interesting  
 humanist response. Angus's response is more literal.

Interviewer : What do you think helped her to do these  
                   things?  
 Angus : She saw all those shirts.  
 Interviewer : So when she saw more shirts it helped her?  
 Angus : Yes.  
 Interviewer : It encouraged her?  
 Angus : Yes, and she made more.

The fact that the prayers are ignored by these children does not  
 provide sufficient evidence for generalized conclusions to be  
 drawn about their religious consciousness, but it is significant  
 enough to be noted as an indication of the way children respond  
 unconsciously. I doubt that any of them would have consciously  
 remembered the prayers and not mentioned them because they had  
 dismissed them as unimportant, but it is very likely that the  
 effect that the prayers might have had simply did not occur to  
 them. The context of the story may contribute to this attitude as  
 it is unusual for prayers to be mentioned in a fairy story.  
 Perhaps if prayers are mentioned in a biblical story, the  
 children's consciousness may be more receptive to the idea of  
 prayers affecting the characters, but unfortunately this cannot  
 be ascertained.



The responses which acknowledge her prayers as helpful to her indicate that the children have some idea of God as someone who answers prayers and helps people, but the story does not provide much stimulus for a deeper exploration of their conceptions.

Interviewer : What do you think helped her to do these things?

Himmel : She Kepted on saying prayers.

Interviewer : And how do you think the prayers helped her?

Himmel : Because God listened and helped her and made her strong.

Interviewer : Why do you think she managed to do everything she did?

Group : Because she said her prayers to God.

Interviewer : And how did that help her?

Group : God gave her strength.

Interviewer : So she felt she wasn't doing it alone?

Group : Yes.

This story contains an example of what Mobley categorizes as  
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 magic which is used capriciously. Magic may be used capriciously to bring about good, but is more often used by evil characters. In this story the queen's jealousy is the ostensible reason for her casting a spell on the princess, but the evil fortune is not deserved and can therefore be considered to be capriciously imposed. This can be regarded as a way in which children are introduced to the idea that bad and often unfair things do happen to people in the real world, but the happy ending offers them the consolation that these things can be endured and that good will ultimately triumph. The story therefore provides stimuli for moral thinking, but in a non-formal manner. The children do not consciously sense that they are being taught something by the story, but their responses indicate that they have been stimulated to think about good and evil, and although they find the existence of evil confusing, they are able to

accept that suffering is sometimes necessary to overcome it. The complexity of children's thinking about suffering is illustrated by the following extract which combines sympathy for and sensitivity to suffering with an inability to understand or explain it.

- Gareth : My best part of the story was when the youngest brother put his head on her lap and he cried on her hands and it made the pain go away.
- Interviewer : Why do you like that part?
- Gareth : Because it took away the pain from her hands.
- Interviewer : And why do you think the tears had that almost magic quality?
- Gareth : Maybe it was just part of the spell that the queen put over them.

### 3.5 A SCOT'S CHRISTMAS STORY. GEORGE MACDONALD

Nelly's father is a shepherd. She and her mother, who is very ill, are waiting for him to come home. He is late because a lamb is missing, but Jumper, the dog, brings it back. That night Nelly overhears her parents talking about Willie, her brother, who is "going the wrong road" in Edinburgh and she dreams that she becomes Jumper and finds the black lamb who is Willie. She decides that she will have to go to Edinburgh to fetch him, and prays that God will teach her to find Willie as he teaches Jumper to find lambs. She walks along the road to Edinburgh and persuades the carrier to take her with him. Willie is not at his lodgings so she goes to find him at the public house, where he is drinking with his friends. At first he is angry with her, but then he feels ashamed and when his friends refuse to let him pass, he jumps on the table, kicks over their drink and takes Nelly home. He is very concerned to hear about his mother's illness and goes home the next day.

The story is more serious in tone than other stories in this study as it deals with good and bad behaviour on a more complex level. The "bad" character, Willie, is portrayed as a fairly straightforward "Prodigal Son" character and as the lost lamb parallel is clearly developed children seem to have no difficulty in recognizing the connection between Jumper finding and bringing back the lamb and Nelly finding and bringing back Willie. The dream in which Nelly becomes Jumper and Willie becomes the lamb is the only element of pure fantasy in the story; yet it has a practical effect as it provides the impetus for Nelly's decision to go to Edinburgh to find Willie.

Nelly was unanimously chosen as the best character for a variety of reasons ranging from her bravery and her kindness to her mother to "because she had the food ready when her father came in." Nelly's motivation in attempting the long journey seems to be clearly understood.

- Interviewer : What made Nelly decide to fetch her brother?  
 Group : She loved him very much.  
 : To save her mother's life. No, she didn't save her mother, but made her happy.  
 : She liked her brother and she wanted her brother back.  
 : Because her mother would die.

- Interviewer : Why do you think Nelly decided to go on the long journey?  
 Janet : Just to find Willie because her mother was sick and she did want Willie back.  
 Interviewer : And was it an easy thing to do?  
 Both : No.  
 Interviewer : Why wasn't it easy?  
 Peter : Because she had to walk a long way and in the morning she didn't know where she was.  
 Interviewer : How do you think she managed to do it even though she was so small?  
 Janet : Because she was very brave and very clever.  
 Interviewer : Can you think of anything else that helped her?  
 Peter : The carter helped her to get to the town.

Eric : I liked it when Nelly got her brother back.  
 Interviewer : Why?  
 Eric : Because everyone wanted her brother back.  
 Interviewer : Do you think it was easy for her to get her brother back?  
 Eric : No.  
 Interviewer : What do you think made her do it even though it was difficult?  
 Eric : Courage and love.  
 Interviewer : Why did she have the courage?  
 Eric : Because she wanted her brother back and she thought how her mother and father felt and her mother dying and her brother not being there.  
 Interviewer : Do you think that if you love someone you'll do extra special things for him?  
 Eric : Yes.  
 Interviewer : Do you think you would've been able to do what Nelly did?  
 Eric : I don't know. I've never tried.

There is also awareness of the fact that Nelly's behaviour is exceptional and not merely an automatic response which any child may have made in a similar situation. The children respond honestly and realistically when questioned as to what they may have done, which seems to indicate a certain moral responsibility. It would be easy for them to suggest that they would have been as brave as Nelly, but their recognition of the almost sacrificial nature of her journey seems to put her on a different level.

Interviewer : What would you have felt like if you'd had to sleep under the rock?  
 Peter : Cold.  
 Janet : Very cold.  
 Interviewer : Would you have been scared?  
 Peter : No.  
 Janet : Yes, I think I would.  
 Interviewer : And when you woke up the next morning how would you feel?  
 Peter : I'd feel like just going home.  
 Janet : I'd feel like going back to sleep again.  
 Interviewer : Do you think Nelly may have felt like that?  
 Peter : Yes.  
 Interviewer : Why do you think she didn't just stop?  
 Janet : Because she wanted to go on.  
 Interviewer : And why did she want to go on?  
 Peter : Because she wanted to find her brother.

Interviewer : So that was more important than being comfortable herself.  
Both : Yes.

Nelly's moral reasoning (and the children's implicit acceptance of it) is impossible to categorize in Piagetian or Kohlbergian terms. In the context of her home Nelly would probably conform to Kohlberg's "good boy/nice girl" category (stage 3), but her behaviour goes beyond the simple desire to gain her parents' approval because her emotions are involved. As the children recognize, it is because she loves her brother that she is able to do what she does (even though she knows her parents would not approve). The children's response to her is also emotive rather than cognitive - they respond to her "goodness" without thinking about it. It is interesting that nobody criticized her for being a "goody - goody".

Willie's motivation for the way he behaves is less clearly understood but he is regarded as a bad character and his reform at the end of the story is recognized.

Interviewer : Was there anyone you didn't like?  
Group : Yes, Willie.  
Interviewer : Why not?  
: Because he drank whisky and he keeps doing something naughty.  
: He's rude.  
: He done naughty things.  
Interviewer : Why wasn't he pleased to see Nelly?  
: Because he didn't want Nelly to see him drinking because he wanted to go home and tell his mother that he hadn't drunk, but Nelly would tell his mother.  
: He knew he shouldn't be there and his friends were rude to Nelly.

Interviewer : Why do you think Willie was so cross when Nelly arrived?  
Peter : Because he didn't want to go home.  
Interviewer : Why not?

Janet : Because there were only a few people in his family and it was so windy.  
 Peter : He didn't want to sleep there because he wanted to stay by his friends.

Interviewer : Why do you think Willie got so cross?  
 Maurice : Um, because he knew about his mother dying, but he didn't want to come home, you see.  
 Interviewer : So you think he felt bad?  
 Maurice : Yes.

Interviewer : Do you think if you were Willie sitting with your friends you would be pleased to see Nelly?  
 Bruce : I would be pleased to see Nelly.  
 Interviewer : Do you think he was pleased?  
 Bruce : Um ...  
 David : No, I think he was angry. I think he would say, "Go home" and "I don't want to see you."  
 Interviewer : And what would you have done if you were Willie?  
 David : I would've said, "All right, Nelly, I'm coming."

Willie's anger is therefore attributed to fear that Nelly would tell his mother about his drinking (authoritarian response), the desire to stay with his friends (egocentric response) and his conscience. Willie's relationship with his friends is examined and the children show signs of understanding (even though they condemn Willie's behaviour) the effects which conformity to peer pressure can have and the "bad" motives which operate when people choose friends.

Interviewer : How did his friends behave?  
 Peter : They behaved rude.  
 Janet : Very badly.  
 Interviewer : Why do you think they behaved like that?  
 Janet : 'Cos they didn't want Willie to go because they were one of his friends and they wanted him to stay.  
 Peter : Because Willie was clever.  
 Interviewer : So if Willie wanted to keep his friends instead of going with his sister, what would he have done?  
 Janet : He would've told her to go home and leave him alone.  
 Interviewer : Would that have been right?

- Both : No.
- Interviewer : So do you think he realized that his sister was more important than his friends?
- Peter : Yes.
- Interviewer : What do you think you would've done if you were one of his friends?
- Peter : I wouldn't have acted so rude. I would've rather let him go if he wanted to.
- Janet : I would've just said, "Yes, let him go," because Nelly's only little and she walked all that long way so she can't go without him because that's just a waste of time.
- Eric : I didn't like it when the students were all mean to Nelly.
- Interviewer : Why do you think they behaved like that?
- Eric : Because they just didn't like girls, I guess.
- Interviewer : Why do you think Willie was their friend?
- Eric : He probably just wanted to be with them because they were doing grown-up things.
- Interviewer : So do you think he chose his friends for the wrong reasons?
- Eric : Yes, because they did silly things.
- Interviewer : Do you think that people who do silly things will ever change?
- Eric : Sometimes yes, sometimes no.
- Interviewer : And Willie's friends, could they ever change?
- Eric : I think they may have learnt their lesson.
- Interviewer : And do you think Willie changed?
- Maurice : Yes.
- Interviewer : Why did he change?
- Maurice : He thought his mother was going to die.
- Interviewer : So he felt sorry?
- Maurice : Yes.
- Interviewer : Do you think he would ever go back to being the way he was?
- Eric : No.
- Maurice : No, he wouldn't go back to his friends.
- Interviewer : So you think he'd changed for good?
- Maurice : He knew he'd made a big mistake.

Willie's reform process is related to the way his parents reacted to his return. As a change in behaviour is often linked in children's minds with punishment, the question of the parents' forgiveness of Willie is explored. As the concept of forgiveness is an abstract one, children who are used to reasoning within an obedience/punishment framework may find the concept confusing, particularly if they usually experience punishment as a direct consequence of their own disobedience (which must appear to them

to be negligible when compared with Willie's disobedience). Bruce and David realize that Willie was not punished, but search for a concrete reason for this.

- Interviewer : Were Willie's parents cross with him when he returned?  
 Bruce : No, they weren't.  
 David : They were pleased.  
 Interviewer : Why?  
 David : Because they missed him and because he didn't tell a lie and he came back by the end of April.  
 Interviewer : Do you think they had been upset at first when he didn't come back?  
 David : I think they were angry.  
 Interviewer : What made them change when they saw him?  
 David : Because ... (Long pause).  
 Interviewer : What made them forgive him?  
 David : I think they forgave him when he should of ... (Pause.)  
 Bruce : I think it's because he came the right time.

David suggests that Willie has not really done anything wrong because he has returned by a certain date, but seems to sense the inadequacy of his answer although he is unable to suggest a reason for their forgiving Willie. Bruce ignores the questions relating to forgiveness by reverting to David's original idea. The other responses recognize that Willie has transgressed and that his parents forgive him because they choose to do so and not because it is an easy thing to do.

- Interviewer : What did Nelly's parents do when Willie got home?  
 Peter : They weren't cross with Willie at all.  
 Interviewer : Why do you think they weren't cross?  
 Janet : Because they wanted Willie back.  
 Interviewer : He hadn't been good, but what did they do?  
 Peter : They didn't hit him or anything.  
 Janet : Or scold him.  
 Interviewer : So they didn't punish him at all, but do you think sometimes people need to be punished?  
 Both : Yes.  
 Interviewer : And do you think they should've punished Willie?  
 Peter : No, because he wasn't so bad bad.



- Interviewer : Do you think he was sorry about what he'd done?
- Both : Yes.
- Interviewer : And does that make a difference? If you do something naughty and you're sorry, does that help?
- Peter : No, it's not quite right.
- Interviewer : So do you think that sometimes even if you're sorry you should be punished?
- Both : Yes.

Janet and Peter, although they feel that punishment is necessary at times, are able to understand the principle of forgiveness and accept it. The question of the fairness of punishment is discussed in the following extract.

- Interviewer : How did Willie's parents react towards him?
- Eric : Friendly and loving.
- Interviewer : Were they cross at all?
- Maurice : No.
- Interviewer : Do you think they should've been cross with him?
- Maurice : Yes.
- Interviewer : If they'd been cross, would it have been fair?
- Maurice : Yes.
- Interviewer : So he deserved it?
- Maurice : Yes.
- Interviewer : Why do you think they weren't cross with him?
- Eric : They were glad to see him home.
- Interviewer : Do you know what it's called when someone's been nasty to you and you don't hold it against him? (Pause.) Forgiveness. Was it easy for his parents to forgive him?
- Eric : No.
- Interviewer : So why did they do it?
- Eric : Because they were happy to see him back so they forgot about it because he was turned into good.
- Interviewer : So because he was going to be good they forgot about it?
- Eric : Yes.

Severity of punishment is often seen to be the most effective

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corrective measure so the fact that Willie changes his behaviour as a result of not being punished may be confusing if this view of punishment is prevalent. Janet and Peter are able to reason that in this case forgiveness is more efficacious than punishment.

- Interviewer : Willie's parents didn't punish him because he was sorry and they forgave him. What do you think about forgiveness?
- Peter : It's the right thing to forgive.
- Interviewer : So his parents did the right thing even though he'd done the wrong thing?
- Peter : Yes.
- Interviewer : Do you think Willie would still remember not to do the naughty things he'd been doing even though he wasn't punished?
- Peter : Yes.
- Interviewer : So do you think Willie's parents were right not to punish him, but to forgive him?
- Janet : Yes.
- Interviewer : And what would've happened if they had punished him?
- Janet : He would've gone away.
- Peter : He would go back to college to his friends.

They accept that forgiveness is "right" and also recognize that if Willie's parents had punished him his resentment may have driven him away from them. This indicates that they, as well as Eric and Maurice, are able to reason in a more complex manner than on a simple obedience/punishment level. Maurice acknowledges the parents' right to punish Willie in terms of fair exchange - he had done wrong, so he deserved to be punished - but recognizes that forgiveness is not subject to the rules of justice. Willie learns his lesson because he feels ashamed and not because he is punished, and the change in his behaviour is seen as a change in attitude and not merely a way of avoiding future punishment.

It has been said of George MacDonald that he was "the first writer in the English language to bring a truly religious significance to children's literature."<sup>27</sup> This story is perhaps the best one to support that statement, but its moral theme is clear even though the fact that Willie learns his lesson is not stressed, as it most certainly would have been had the story been told by one of MacDonald's more moralistic contemporaries. When his writing is compared with that of modern writers, it

does contain elements of moralism; however, when compared with his contemporaries, he stands out because of his inability to lecture or insult children by explaining moral issues to them. The religious element is present, but often occurs in symbolic form. In this story children are presented with a situation which involves forgiveness. Although the concept of forgiveness may be difficult for them to understand, it is not explained and therefore the story (in spite of its serious tone) does not have the flavour of moralism. The children do not feel that the purpose of the story is to teach them something and yet paradoxically they may well have learnt something without being aware of it. W.H. Auden's comment on MacDonald seems relevant.

To me, George MacDonald's most extraordinary, and precious, gift is his ability in all his stories, to create an atmosphere of goodness about which there is nothing phony or moralistic. Nothing is rarer in literature. 28

### 3.6 CHAPTER 7, IN WHICH TIGGER IS UNBOUNCED. IN THE HOUSE AT POOH CORNER .A. A. MILNE

Rabbit decides that Tigger is getting too bouncy and should be taught a lesson. He plans to lose Tigger in the forest so that Tigger when found the next morning will be a "Humble Tigger, a Sad Tigger, a Melancholy Tigger, a Small and Sorry Tigger, an Oh-Rabbit-I-am-glad-to-see-you Tigger." (p. 109) Piglet is doubtful about the plan at first, but is reassured by Rabbit's assertion that Christopher Robin would consider it "a good deed". The plan backfires, however, and Pooh, Piglet and Rabbit are lost rescued by Tigger, who becomes "a Friendly Tigger, a Grand Tigger a Large and Helpful Tigger, a Tigger who bounced, if he bounced at all, in just the beautiful way a Tigger ought to bounce." (pp. 123, 124)

This story does not present a strong dualistic view of good and evil; on the contrary, there are no truly "bad" characters, but the story does have a moral, although it is a very gentle one. The "evil" which is parodied is self-righteousness, but humour tempers the punishment. The amusing reversal of the plan which appeals because of its "sheer reciprocity" involves the learning of a lesson by Rabbit, and the lesson learnt (in a non-moralistic way) is the ironic one that trying to teach someone a lesson is not good.

Tigger's only "badness" is his non-conformity (i.e. being too bouncy) whereas Rabbit deliberately plans to lose Tigger in the forest. The children are divided in opinion about Tigger's bounciness. Some agree that Rabbit should have tried to stop him from bouncing, but seem to think that his plan was too severe, while others support Tigger.

Interviewer : Was it a good idea to teach Tigger a lesson?  
 Group : No.  
 Interviewer : Why not?  
               : They should have known it would backfire.  
               : I think it wasn't a good idea because I liked  
                   Tigger being bouncy because I'm bouncy myself.  
               : It's a horrible thing to teach someone a  
                   lesson.

Although there is a general feeling against being taught a lesson, there is an understanding that it is sometimes necessary.

Interviewer : Is it a good thing to teach someone a lesson?  
 David : No, only if they're horrible to you.  
 Interviewer : So was Tigger being horrible?  
 David : No, he was just bouncing.  
 Interviewer : What do you think if someone tries to teach  
                   you a lesson?  
 Karen : I think it's horrible because I don't want to  
                   hurt anybody's feelings.  
 Interviewer : Why do you think people want to teach others a  
                   lesson? (Pause.) Do they only do it because  
                   they're nasty?

David : No, like your mother gives you a spanking and she's not nasty 'cos you're naughty.

Interviewer : So sometimes it's deserved? You deserve to be taught a lesson?

David : Yes.

Interviewer : Do you think it's a good idea to teach someone a lesson?

Both : No.

Interviewer : Why not? (Pause.) Well, do you think Tigger needed to have a lesson taught to him?

Debbie : Yes.

Interviewer : Why?

Debbie : Because he was bouncy.

Interviewer : You said it's not a good idea to teach someone a lesson, but that Tigger was too bouncy so what could they have done instead of trying to lose him?

Debbie : They could tell him not to be bouncy.

Interviewer : And do you think that would work?

Both : No.

Interviewer : Why not?

Ken : Because he can't stop.

Interviewer : So you think he couldn't help being so bouncy?

Ken : Yes.

Interviewer : So if you can't help something do you think someone should teach you a lesson?

Ken : Um, no.

Interviewer : What do you think they should do then?

Ken : I don't know.

Interviewer : And what if someone does something naughty?

Ken : Then you must teach them a lesson.

Interviewer : And how do you think they must be taught a lesson?

Ken : (Pause.) Give them a hiding.

This seems to indicate a somewhat authoritarian or in Kohlberg's terms obedience/punishment type of understanding. There is general acceptance that if one does something wrong one can expect to be taught a lesson, and the only confusion in reasoning arises from the need to decide whether Tigger was wrong or not. Responses to the idea of another attempt to teach Tigger a lesson are more interesting.

Interviewer : Do you think they'd try to teach Tigger another lesson?

Debbie : No.

Interviewer : Why not?

Debbie : Because it will happen to Rabbit again.

Interviewer : Why do you think it'll happen again?  
Debbie : I don't know.

Interviewer : If Rabbit had to think about this again, would he try to teach Tigger a lesson again?

Both : No.

Interviewer : Why not?

David : Because he would get lost.

Karen : Because they wouldn't want to make Tigger feel sorry.

Karen's is the only response which gives an indication that she recognizes that Rabbit's feelings towards Tigger have changed as a result of his being lost. When Rabbit sees Tigger at the end of the story, he becomes aware of Tigger's good characteristics as Tigger becomes "a Friendly Tigger, a Grand Tigger, a Large and Helpful Tigger" (p. 123). Although it is not overtly stated, by implication it can be assumed that Rabbit has undergone a process of reform and that he will continue to regard Tigger differently. Karen shows an understanding of Kohlberg's mutual interpersonal relationships reasoning because she believes that Rabbit would not try to teach Tigger another lesson because he would no longer want to teach Tigger a lesson. Other responses are more utilitarian in nature. Rabbit will not try to teach Tigger a lesson because he does not want the same thing to happen again (avoidance of punishment response). David's response ("Because he would get lost.") and Debbie's response ("Because it will happen to Rabbit again."), together with the following, seem to indicate that there is a feeling of inexplicable inevitability about the backfiring of the plan.

Interviewer : Was it a good idea to teach Tigger a lesson?

Benjamin : No, because it backfired.

Interviewer : And if it hadn't backfired?

Benjamin : No, because you always do the same thing, don't you?

Duncan : He [i.e. Tigger] would still have found his way back.

This attitude about the future of the plan and the probable failure of any future plan may indicate a subconscious realization of the principle of what Piaget terms "immanent justice",<sup>29</sup> i.e. the plan backfired on Rabbit because he deserved to be lost because it was unkind of him to want to lose Tigger, and therefore any future plan will also fail. It may also indicate an inability to evaluate the story. Debbie's "because it will happen to Rabbit again" and Benjamin's "you always do the same thing, don't you?" suggest that they cannot conceive of anything different happening. This relates to Applebee's studies on story evaluation with this age group in which he points out, "there is little compunction to justify a chain of reasoning, nor is there much awareness of contradictory or paradoxical conclusions."<sup>30</sup> This occurs because the story is viewed egocentrically, i.e. the story is nice because I like it.

Egocentric reasoning and inability to evaluate the behaviour of characters are evident when Piglet's feelings about the plan are considered. Piglet is the only character to display any tendencies towards co-operative reasoning by showing concern for what Tigger's feelings may be. His doubts are dispelled when Rabbit assures him that Christopher Robin would consider it a good deed and he capitulates because of his need to be approved by his friends and by Christopher Robin, the closest equivalent to an authority figure in this story. (He seems to be conforming to Kohlberg's "good boy/nice girl" morality.) Most children do not display understanding of Piglet's reasoning.

- Interviewer : Why was Piglet unsure about the plan?  
 Ken : I don't know.  
 Interviewer : He mentioned it was a cold day.  
 Ken : And it was misty.

Interviewer : Yes. Why was he thinking about the weather?  
 Ken : I don't know.  
 Interviewer : Do you think he was thinking about how Tigger would feel?  
 Ken : Yes.  
 Interviewer : Why?  
 Ken : I don't know.  
 Interviewer : So Piglet was thinking about how Tigger would feel all lost and alone in the mist, but why do you think the others didn't think about it? (Pause.) Was that kind of them?  
 Ken : No.  
 Interviewer : So what should they have done?  
 Ken : (Pause.) I don't know.

Even when really probing questions are asked Ken is unable to say why Piglet behaved as he did or to suggest alternative behaviour. Debbie suggests alternatives, but her later answers show that she does not really understand Piglet's problem, and she resorts to using a literal reason from the story instead of considering his motivation.

Interviewer : When Rabbit saw that it was a cold and misty day, what could he have done?  
 Debbie : Stayed at home.  
 Interviewer : So you don't think he should've gone?  
 Debbie : No.  
 Interviewer : And if you were Piglet and you'd thought about how Tigger would feel, what would you do?  
 Debbie : I'd keep him at home.  
 Interviewer : So you would've told him about the plan?  
 Debbie : Yes.  
 Interviewer : And what do you think Rabbit would've thought of Piglet?  
 Ken : Sorry. [Totally misunderstood the question.]  
 Debbie : Yes, sorry.  
 Interviewer : So you think Rabbit would've felt sorry? And what do you think he would've done to Piglet? (Pause.) Do you think he would be pleased?  
 Ken : Yes.  
 Debbie : No.  
 Interviewer : So do you think he might be cross with Piglet?  
 Debbie : Um, maybe.  
 Interviewer : So why do you think Piglet didn't stop the plan?  
 Debbie : He didn't want Tigger to bounce.

Other responses are egocentric in nature which suggests that the children's understanding of Piglet's reasoning is egocentric.



Suggestions as to what he could have done relate primarily to things that would have made his own experience more comfortable.

Interviewer : Why was Piglet doubtful about the plan?  
 Benjamin : He thought he would get lost in the mist.  
 Interviewer : What would you have done if you were Piglet?  
 Benjamin : I would take a map.  
 Duncan : I would remember my way.

Interviewer : Why was Piglet doubtful about the plan at first?  
 Group : He thought it wasn't a nice day and he'd get lost.  
 Interviewer : What would you have done if you were Piglet when he saw the weather was bad?  
 : I'd only go out walking in a furry hat.  
 : I'd have screamed out, "Drop the whole plan, it's no good on such a misty day!"  
 : I'd wear a tracksuit.

Karen and David show the greatest understanding of Piglet's reasoning.

Interviewer : Piglet didn't feel sure about the plan at first. Why do you think that was?  
 David : Because he liked Tigger.  
 Interviewer : So was he thinking how Tigger might feel?  
 Both : Yes.  
 Interviewer : Why do you think Piglet agreed to go on with the plan after thinking about Tigger's being sad?  
 David : Because then the others wouldn't like him.  
 Interviewer : So he thought he'd better do what the others wanted him to do?  
 David : Yes.  
 Interviewer : Do you sometimes do that? You do something and you don't really want to, but you think, "What'll my friends say?"  
 Both : Yes.  
 Interviewer : Is it right to do that?  
 Both : No.  
 Interviewer : What do you think Piglet should've done?  
 David : Not agreed.  
 Karen : He should've not agreed to the plan.

David recognizes that it is Piglet's liking for Tigger and not an egocentric idea that he, Piglet, might get lost in the mist

which makes him uncertain about the plan. He is also able to understand that it is Piglet's need for approval that makes him continue with the plan, and is honest enough to admit that he sometimes does the same as Piglet even though he knows it is not right. In spite of the fact that both children feel that Piglet should not have agreed to the plan, they are unable to suggest suitable alternative behaviour.

Interviewer : What would you have done if you were Piglet  
and you saw it was a cold and misty day?  
Karen : I wouldn't go.  
David : Yes, I'd stay at home.  
Interviewer : And what about Tigger and the plan?  
Karen : I wouldn't think about it.  
David : Nor would I.

Piglet's responsibility in their view seems to extend only as far as distancing himself from the plan. By disassociating himself from the others his conscience may be clear, but it does not prompt him to do anything that might be unpleasant like, for example, trying to persuade them to abandon the plan. Their understanding of Piglet's reasoning, although it shows greater depth than the others, remains essentially egocentric. Their view is indicative of a different type of egocentrism, however, because they have worked through his reasoning process. They can see what he ought to have done, but are also able to understand why he did not act.

As Alison Lurie points out, "Writing about the Pooh books ... has been awkward (if not impossible) since 1963, when Frederick C. Crews published The Pooh Perplex,"<sup>31</sup> and therefore any attempt at analysis runs the risk of becoming another Pooh<sup>32</sup> Perplex essay. This attempt will concentrate on moral elements and bypass literary criticism.

This story is not a moralistic one and yet it involves issues of a moral nature, namely an attempt to teach a lesson and the inadvertent learning of a lesson. The purpose of the story seems to be to amuse the audience rather than to make a moral statement and normally its moral elements would not be considered, but because the story forms part of this study its potential ability to stimulate moral reasoning is assessed.

The manner in which Rabbit learns his lesson is amusing, but it is also scrupulously fair because what happens to him is exactly what he intended to happen to Tigger. The point that he has learnt a lesson is not laboured and therefore children are spared the notion that they were meant to learn something. The operation of moral justice is easily understood in reciprocal terms and the incident is therefore unlikely to stimulate moral thinking beyond acceptance of the fairness of the situation.

Piglet exhibits a more complex moral reasoning process and although the responses indicate that it is not generally understood, it does offer the reader who is able to reason the opportunity to examine Piglet's moral choices. The fact that the reader is presented with a situation which involves a moral choice is more important than the fact that Piglet makes the "wrong" choice because of egocentric reasoning. Responses seem to indicate that the story is useful as a test of present moral reasoning, but that its potential ability to stimulate moral thinking is unlikely to be realized without adult prompting.

### 3.7 THE FORGOTTEN RABBITS. IN THE ADVENTURES OF MR PINK-WHISTLE. ENID BLYTON

Winnie and Morris neglect their pet rabbits as soon as the novelty of having pets wears off. One of the rabbits tries to escape by gnawing through the wire and gets stuck. Mr Pink-Whistle, who is half-human and half-brownie, hears its cries, rescues it and hears how Winnie and Morris forget to feed their rabbits and clean their cages. As "putting things right" is Mr Pink-Whistle's self-appointed mission in life, he sets the rabbits free, makes himself invisible and jumps on the children's beds, leaving dirty footprints on the sheets. As the children are about to eat he throws their dinner out of the window. Their aunt, thinking that they are responsible, sends them to bed where they are horrified to discover Mr Pink-Whistle's handiwork. After repeating the process by throwing their chocolate and biscuits out of the window and jumping on their freshly made beds, Mr Pink-Whistle makes himself visible and explains his behaviour. The ashamed children go to feed the rabbits and are very upset to find them gone.

"It's a hard lesson," said Mr Pink-Whistle, feeling sad.  
 "But learn it, my dears, and you'll be happier in the future - and so will your pets. Good-bye!" (p. 121)

This story is interesting in that it does not have the usual Enid Blyton happy ending, although the ending can be considered a satisfying one for child readers concerned with justice because the children are punished for their neglect of the rabbits. The understanding of good and evil is fairly simplistic - the good, innocent rabbits (although they suffer temporarily) are rewarded with freedom and the bad children are made to experience the same

type of suffering that the rabbits endured. The punishment falls into the category of what Piaget terms "sheer reciprocity" and the fact that the administration of the punishment is amusing clearly adds to its appeal. Four children said that they liked best the part where Mr Pink-Whistle throws Winnie and Morris's food away because it is funny. This could be classified as a purely egocentric response to the punishment (i.e. I like it because it makes me laugh; therefore it is a good punishment), but the children also show an awareness of the fairness of the punishment. They agree that it was right for Mr Pink-Whistle to do what he did because the children deserved it. Most interesting responses are elicited when the children are asked to suggest alternatives to Mr Pink-Whistle's punishment, when the question of whether it is right to throw away food is raised and when the reform process is evaluated.

One child, Leonardo, displays total inability to consider anything beyond the confines of the story he has been told and he continually lapses into a narrative rather than evaluative response, which indicates that he regards the story as an absolute entity which cannot change. Evaluation of why something happened or consideration of alternatives is for him a pointless exercise. When asked if Mr Pink-Whistle could have done something other than throwing away their food, he retells the part of the story which describes how Mr Pink-Whistle let the rabbits out of the hutch.

Interviewer : Yes, that's what he did, but could he have done anything else?

Leonardo : Yes, yes, when ... when their mother wasn't looking he could've grabbed their plates and just throw the food out of the window and then the food was just lying on the ground and ... and the mother was very cross.

His use of the word "could've" to describe what actually happens further illustrates his inability to conceptualize anything outside of the story. Other suggestions of alternatives offered are a similar though slightly more severe punishment and unrelated though presumably effective punishment, "hidings".

- Interviewer : Do you think he could've done anything else?  
 David : Yes, I would say when they go to school he takes all their sandwiches and juice out their bottles and when they're sitting down to eat, he puts all the cake and stuff into their face
- Interviewer : What could he have done?  
 Keri : He could have given them hidings.  
 Interviewer : And would that have been better?  
 Keri : Yes.  
 Interviewer : And, Brendon, could he have done anything else?  
 Brendon : Yes, he could but that was the best lesson.  
 Interviewer : So what he did was the best?  
 Brendon : Well, one of them (He suggests breaking their toys).  
 Interviewer : And what do you think would've happened if he'd just spoken to them and said, "Look your rabbits are very unhappy."  
 Keri : That wouldn't be any good because they'd just ignore him.  
 Interviewer : So you think there are some things you must be punished for?  
 Keri : Yes, if we're naughty we must be punished.

Anna and Vanessa's responses change when an alternative to the punishment is asked for. At first they agree that it was right for Mr Pink-Whistle to jump on the children's beds and throw away their food.

- Interviewer : Could Mr Pink-Whistle have done anything else?  
 Both : Yes.  
 Interviewer : What could he do?  
 Anna : He could've just told them to treat their pets properly.  
 Interviewer : Would that have been better than what he did?  
 Anna : Yes, because it wasn't really fair to jump on their beds.  
 Interviewer : Vanessa?  
 Vanessa : Um. (Pause.)

- Interviewer : What do you think about the throwing away of the food?
- Vanessa : It's wasting, because there are a lot of people that don't have enough to eat, so it's not fair to throw away other people's food.
- Interviewer : So do you think he should've just taken it away?
- Vanessa : He should've given it to them [the people who have no food] or he shouldn't have taken it away.
- Interviewer : So do you think he should've just spoken to them?
- Vanessa : Yes.
- Interviewer : But do you think they would've learnt their lesson if he just spoke to them?
- Vanessa : No.
- Interviewer : So why do you think he did it?
- Anna : To make them remember not to do it again.

Although the suggestion that he should have spoken to them instead is seen to be not as effective as what he did, there is a hint of disapproval and an awareness that perhaps Mr Pink-Whistle has been a little over-enthusiastic in applying sheer reciprocity. This shows a more advanced understanding of punishment which is linked to Vanessa's ideas on wasting food. Although the punishment is deserved and effective (it will "make them remember not to do it again"), it is wasteful as "there are a lot of people that don't have enough to eat" and the implication is that Mr Pink-Whistle should have been aware of this and therefore should have known better. Other responses indicate that the waste of the food is justified because Mr Pink-Whistle had good reasons.

- Interviewer : What do you usually think if people throw away food?
- Keri : It's bad.
- Interviewer : Why is it bad?
- Keri : Because it's wasting money.
- Brendon : Yes.
- Interviewer : And what did you think when Mr. Pink-Whistle threw food out of the window?
- Keri : It served them right.
- Interviewer : So is it all right to do something you don't normally do if there's a good reason?

Keri : Yes.  
 Interviewer : And do you think it was a good reason?  
 Keri : Yes.  
 Interviewer : Was Mr Pink-Whistle still wasting food when he threw it away?  
 Keri : Yes, but it was right to do it because it served them right.

Interviewer : What do you normally feel about people who throw away food?  
 Group : It's wasteful.  
 Interviewer : So do you think it's right?  
 : But you're throwing away money.  
 : He had to because they didn't feed the pets.

There is an authoritarian understanding of the "rightness" of the punishment - Mr Pink-Whistle is a grown-up, an authority figure, and therefore he is allowed to do what others cannot. Keri exhibits a strong tendency to use authoritarian, obedience/punishment type reasoning as even the rabbits are recipients of her moral censure.

Interviewer : What normally happens if animals go into the vegetable patch and eat up vegetables?  
 Brendon : The owner gets cross.  
 Interviewer : So were they right to eat the vegetables?  
 Keri : No.  
 Interviewer : Why not?  
 Keri : Because they weren't allowed to.  
 Brendon : I think they should because they didn't get food in the cage.  
 Interviewer : So was this like stealing vegetables?  
 Brendon : No, not so bad.

Brendon is able to realize that the rabbit's need for food justifies their eating from the vegetable patch whereas Keri sees it as transgression of an absolute rule, and therefore wrong. Motivation for behaviour is not a factor in her reasoning process. Her credibility becomes questionable on the subject of being taught a lesson. Presumably she is answering in the way she feels she is expected (by authority) to answer. Brendon at least displays honesty.



Interviewer : Is it a good thing to teach someone a lesson?  
 Both : Yes.  
 Interviewer : And do you like it when someone teaches you a lesson?  
 Keri : Yes.  
 Interviewer : Are you glad?  
 Keri : Yes.  
 Brendon : No, I don't like it, but we need to have a lesson.

The final aspect of this story to be evaluated is whether Winnie and Morris undergo a process of reform, i.e. has the punishment created not only a short-term awareness of the discomfort the rabbits experienced but also a long-term improvement in Winnie and Morris's behaviour?

Interviewer : How do you think Winnie and Morris would treat new pets?  
 Group : Very nice.  
           : I think they'd think a bit more.  
 Interviewer : Why do you think they'd treat them better?  
           : Because they've learnt a lesson and found out what's going to happen to them.  
           : They would learn that they ... and they don't want it to happen otherwise they have to do this again and they've learnt a big lesson.  
 Interviewer : How do you think Winnie and Morris will treat any new pets they might have?  
 Vanessa : They would treat them well.  
 Interviewer : Why?  
 Vanessa : Because they don't want to lose them.  
 Anna : They treat them well because they're scared that Mr Pink-Whistle will let them go again and teach them another lesson.

Interviewer : If Winnie and Morris's mother bought them another rabbit do you think they'd look after it properly?  
 Both : Yes.  
 Interviewer : Why?  
 Brendon : Because the last one they lost.  
 Keri : They got punishment.  
 Interviewer : Why do you think they'll look after the next one better?  
 Brendon : They had a lesson.  
 Keri : Because they got punished so they have to look after it.  
 Interviewer : So do you think they'll be scared they'll be punished again?  
 Keri : Yes.

- Interviewer : Do you think that they'll ever be cruel to rabbits again?
- Both : No.
- Interviewer : Why not?
- Leonardo : Because they said, "We'll never do that again," and then they went downstairs and they saw no rabbits and then Mr Pink-Whistle said, "I made your rabbits go away because you are cruel to them." [Leonardo resorts to narration again instead of evaluation.]
- Interviewer : How would they treat new pets?
- Daniel : They'll treat them ... um ... they'll give them all new hay and new food and clean their cage out.
- Interviewer : Why do you think they would do that?
- Daniel : Because Mr Pink-Whistle will come again and then they'll get into all sorts of trouble again.

Although there is a general consensus of opinion that Winnie and Morris will not behave in the same way again, the story does not appear to have stimulated the children's thinking about positive reasons why Winnie and Morris will behave differently. Their prime motivation for behaving differently is seen to be fear that Mr Pink-Whistle will return, and therefore the respondents are operating on the obedience/punishment level of reasoning. To paraphrase Kay: "The right thing to do is to avoid angering Mr Pink-Whistle; the wrong thing to do is to assert one's own will." <sup>33</sup> The story presents the reader with a situation in which justice of the "tit-for-tat" kind is done. Reciprocal punishment is meted out and is reinforced as "right" by its amusing nature. The reader is not required to make any personal moral judgements as there is no ambiguity apparent in the situation; the children are wrong, Mr Pink-Whistle is right, and they deserve their punishment. The story therefore appeals to readers who are using obedience/punishment type reasoning, but does not offer much scope for stimulating reasoning of any other type. It is doubtful whether the children would have spontaneously questioned the

morality of Mr Pink-Whistle's wasting food if they had not been prompted to consider the usual attitude. It cannot be ascertained whether or not the story reinforces obedience/punishment type reasoning, but the children's responses seem to suggest that its moral tone is understood to be authoritarian. It appears that although the punishment is of a reciprocal nature, its influence as punishment negates any effect it may have in stimulating reciprocity as a motivation for future treatment of animals, i.e. it is not envisaged that the children will treat their pets well because they understand how the pets feel and do not want to cause them to suffer, but because they fear punishment.

### 3.8 CONCLUSION

For reasons outlined in Chapter 1, rigid categorization of children into moral stages was never considered an element of this study and therefore analyses refer to Piagetian and Kohlbergian stages to indicate a facet of the type of reasoning employed by children and not as a means of enabling allocation of particular children to fixed stages. The responses to individual stories have already been analysed in detail and therefore the emphasis in this conclusion is on the diversity of responses and moral reasoning elicited by the stories rather than a comparative evaluation of their moral content.

The analyses indicate that there is great diversification of reasoning within this 6- to 8-year-old group, ranging from total inability to evaluate the story at all (Leonardo's narrative instead of analytical response) to fairly complicated interpretive religious reasoning (Victoria's statement: "because when

Jesus kisses things that haven't been nice for a long time they become good.") The variety of the different types of reasoning used is evident not only within the group as a whole, but also in the responses of the same child as mentioned in the analyses. It would appear, therefore, that assessment of the analyses should include the compilation of a composite picture of common features as well as the range of moral reasoning which the children display.

The children seem to have developed the ability to distinguish between good and evil. They are able to recognize basic differences between good and evil characters, but are less able to assess the motivation for doing evil (e.g. the ugly princess is horrible because she is ugly and the queen is wicked because she is a witch or because she works for the devil). There seems to be some confusion in deciding whether a character is good or bad when the role is non-stereotypical or not clearly defined, especially if the character's behaviour is in conflict with an authoritarian understanding of good. Tigger's bounciness and the rabbits' consumption of vegetables in the vegetable patch are examples of "uncertain" behaviour. When a character is clearly recognized as a good character the motivation for doing good is usually well expressed in responses. This is particularly true of the stories in which good characters undergo suffering in order to help others. The children recognize the difficulty of Nelly's Journey and Elisa's task and although they do not regard the suffering as fair, they accept it as necessary because they can understand that love is the motivating force which enables Nelly and Elisa to do what they feel they have to do. Responses indicate that children's views on evil, or (to express it less

strongly) "badness", are closely related to the concept of punishment, especially when the behaviour and/or attitudes of a bad character are seen to undergo a change for the better. It is not surprising that children in this age group display a clear understanding of punishment as it almost certainly features prominently in their everyday life.

Generally punishment is regarded as necessary, although it is unpleasant, and it is considered to be fair when the person who is punished deserves punishment. Punishment is often viewed as a natural consequence of doing something bad, and therefore it is regarded as inevitable that the punishment will be repeated if the action is repeated. One of the most frequently mentioned motivating factors in the reform of a character is the punishment he or she has received and avoidance of further punishment is seen as the primary reason for the change to be a long-term one. Even when, as in the case of Rabbit, the reform of the character is the result of bad fortune rather than direct punishment, his change in attitude towards Tigger is seen to be long-lasting mainly because he does not want to be lost in the forest again. Only one out of six respondents suggested that he would not try to teach Tigger a lesson again because he would no longer want to.

When reform takes place in a story where the bad character is not officially punished (e.g. Willie is not punished by his parents although he is made to feel ashamed of himself when Nelly arrives), it is accepted and regarded to be a long-term change. The attitude towards punishment appears to be context-related which seems to indicate that a situation in a story which in-

volves punishment is not the most effective way of presenting a moral idea because instead of encouraging children to think about why they should not do the bad thing it is more likely to make them consider how the punishment could be avoided. It appears therefore that situations which involve punishment may tend to reinforce thinking of the obedience/punishment type.

There is great difficulty in attempting to assess the degree to which children are successful in relating their moral responses to literature to their everyday thinking. The moral problem in the story is generally understood in context-dependent terms, and therefore the children may approve or disapprove of a character's behaviour because they are able to judge it in terms of what happens in a particular story. When the problem is related to their own situation, it often seems irrelevant, especially when the children still hold a largely egocentric view of their own situation. There is therefore no direct evidence to confirm that their moral responses are indicative of the types of responses they might make in a real life situation, but there is a possibility that the transition may take place. There is certainly evidence that the transition takes place in the opposite direction as children include aspects of their own experience in their description of what happens in a story (e.g. Victoria's own beliefs become part of the story when she says that Jesus would make the flowers bloom in the giant's garden).

It must once again be stressed that the aim of this study is to investigate immediate responses to situations in literature and therefore the evaluation of moral reasoning tends to concentrate on what is believed to be the children's existing moral

reasoning. No attempt has been made to teach children to use a certain type of moral reasoning or to extend their present reasoning; the ways in which this study may contribute to future research is discussed in the final chapter. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the literature in stimulating moral reasoning, although it does include consideration of the potential stimulation of thought, essentially centres on the stimulation of existing reasoning. The variety of responses demonstrates that there can be no "expected" response to a story and therefore it would appear that writers who attempt to convey a strong moral message are unlikely to make a lasting impression. It is questionable whether any story, whether moralistic or fantastic, will have a long-lasting effect, but in terms of short-term effectiveness it appears that different types of stories do affect moral reasoning. Even though it may contain issues beyond children's cognitive understanding, a story which creates a situation which encourages children to reason through a moral problem is likely to be morally more effective than a story in which the moral problem, although it may be clearly outlined, is not worked through by the reader in any depth because the solution to the problem is a given entity rather than something which is discovered by the reader.

## CHAPTER 4. IMAGINATION AND MORAL CHOICE: ANALYSIS OF THE LITERATURE & RESPONSES OF THE OLDER GROUP

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

Nine stories representing the works of seven authors were selected for analysis in this section. Because of the specialized nature of their subject matter, two stories by each of the following authors were selected: Enid Blyton (The Mystery of the Disappearing Cat,<sup>1</sup> The Six Bad Boys<sup>2</sup>) and Patricia M. St. John (Rainbow Garden,<sup>3</sup> Star of Light<sup>4</sup>). The other works are: Louisa May Alcott's Little Women,<sup>5</sup> Susan Cooper's The Dark is Rising,<sup>6</sup> Madeleine L'Engle's A Wrinkle in Time,<sup>7</sup> C.S. Lewis's The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe,<sup>8</sup> and J.R.R. Tolkien's The Hobbit.<sup>9</sup>

As with the stories selected for the younger group, these stories cannot be definitively categorized as moralistic in nature because the categories of moralism and fantasy have been shown not to be mutually exclusive. There is a distinction however, between fantasy and non-fantasy. The non-fantasy works are Little Women, Rainbow Garden, Star of Light, The Mystery of the Disappearing Cat and The Six Bad Boys, whereas the others can all be classified as fantasy because of their other-worldly involvement.

This chapter comprises seven sections besides the introduction and conclusion. In order to avoid repetition of comments of a general or critical nature about authors who are represented



by two stories, after the introduction the division is made under author headings. This is merely a convenient descriptive delineation and is not intended to indicate the placing of undue emphasis on the role of the author in assessment of reader response. Responses to the questionnaire show that children in this age group take cognisance of the author in their selection of books (e.g. "I like all Willard Price books", "I hate Enid Blyton books"), and therefore the author is given more attention in this chapter, but with careful avoidance of the creation of an intentional fallacy situation. Because the idea of moral purpose and its integration in the literary work are important areas of investigation in this study, and because the awareness of complexity in moral issues is likely to be heightened in the older group, the approach in discussion of responses to the stories differs. Whereas the author and textual components in Purves's model of literary integration<sup>10</sup> were discussed to a lesser degree in the previous chapter, greater emphasis is placed on these components in this chapter.

With the exception of St. John the authors are well-known children's writers and therefore critical material on the works does exist. Evaluation of critical material does not imply a move away from the important aspect of reader response to a structuralist textual approach. The concentration on textual details, on the contrary, is a direct means of enhancing reader response. This study is directed at examining a specific type of response, namely that of children to moral elements in the stories they have read. The study therefore implicitly demands that the texts contain situations in which moral questions arise, and therefore texts have been specifically and deliberately

chosen in the hope that they will produce interesting moral responses.

Although the texts are all concerned with the treatment of good and evil in some form, the emphasis on the type of moral situation discussed also shifts. Like the stories for the younger group a number of texts involve situations in which characters change their behaviour, but whereas punishment was an important determining factor in effecting reform in the younger group, motivation for behaviour is now considered more important. Children tend to have moved away from an obedience/punishment orientation towards recognition of the importance of gaining others' approval (Kohlberg's Stage 3 in moral development).

As well as this more complex understanding of changes in character, investigation and discussion are centred on moral concepts of a more abstract nature like betrayal, forgiveness, and love as a force for overcoming evil. Good and evil are considered in a wider context than simply their effect on society as demonstrated by good and bad characters - the idea of a constant struggle between good and evil is explored in some texts.

Questionnaires and the follow-up interviews are purposefully structured in an open-ended way in order to allow spontaneous suggestions of incidents considered by the respondents to be important, but generally discussion tends to centre on the incidents isolated by me. As far as possible leading questions are avoided, but children are prompted on occasion when responses fail to address the moral issue. Discussion is loosely structured around D.W.Harding's system of assessment of reader response,<sup>10</sup> involving empathy with the characters, evaluation

of their actions (these two elements are applied to the younger group as well), and understanding of acceptance or rejection of values implied by the author's interests and attitudes. The last element of response is not elicited by means of direct questioning about the author's attitudes as the children's response to the values expressed is of primary importance. They are not asked whether they accept or reject values because their evaluation of values is interpreted from their general responses.

#### 4.2 LOUISA MAY ALCOTT. LITTLE WOMEN

Little Women was first published in 1867 and is still widely read by young girls today. Its popularity is not an issue which will be explored too deeply, but attention is concentrated on the moral values it embodies, the way they are expressed and how children respond to them.

The story deals with the trials and tribulations of the March family, "Marmee" and four daughters, while Mr March is away at war. Mrs March reminds them how they used to play Pilgrim's Progress and encourages them to continue.

Our burdens are here, our road is before us, and the longing for goodness and happiness is the guide that leads us through many troubles and mistakes to the peace which is a true Celestial City. Now, my little pilgrims, suppose you begin again not in play, but in earnest, and see how far on you can get before father comes home (p. 9).

Throughout the book they struggle with their "burdens", Meg's vanity, Jo's temper, Amy's pride and selfishness and Beth's fear of strangers. That the book contains moralistic passages cannot be disputed, but the author's methods in conveying her values are innovative for her time. By the introduction of characters

unlike the current saintly stereotype (to which Beth tends to conform), she makes the moralism more acceptable to the reader. Jo's character is appealing not only because her behaviour is non-conformist and unladylike (she whistles and runs!), but because she has courage. (She sells her hair to earn money to help her injured father.) The following extract illustrates how Alcott tempers the morals with humour. Amy has been reprimanded for being conceited.

"I see, it's nice to have accomplishments, and be elegant; but not to show off or get perked up," said Amy thoughtfully.

"These things are always seen and felt in a person's manner and conversation if modestly used, but it is not necessary to display them," said Mrs March.

"Any more than it's proper to wear all your bonnets and gowns and ribbons at once, that folks may know you've got them," added Jo; and the lecture ended in a laugh. (p. 64)

Historically, she was an innovator and has been referred to as "that sensible revolutionary who opened the windows in all the overshuttered, overgimcracked, overplushed houses of children's literature. The boisterous air of life came in." <sup>11</sup> It is this "air of life" found in the book which has maintained her popularity, because the March girls, although "apt to be painful" when good, are realistically bad, as Janeway points out.

Miss Alcott preached, and the conclusions she came to are frequently too good to be true; but the facts of emotion that she started with were real. She might end by softening the ways to deal with them, but she began by looking them in the eye. Her girls were jealous, mean, silly and lazy; and for a hundred years jealous, mean, silly, and lazy girls have been ardently grateful for the chance to read about themselves. If Miss Alcott's prescriptions for curing their sins are too simple, it doesn't alter the fact that her diagnoses are clear, unequivocal, and humanly right. It must have been a heavenly relief a hundred years ago to learn that one's faults were not unique. Today I suspect that it

is a relief to be told to take them seriously and struggle with them; that it is important to be good. 12

It is perhaps because of the realistic nature of her characters and their problems that the author succeeds in creating a situation in which the reader, like the March girls, knows but does not mind that she is being lectured because of the way in which it is done. The very elements which the modern reader may find strange, and which Bragg admits he finds "difficult to digest", are the one's which he stresses as important:

The insistence on a Christian morality, on rules, on the author stepping in to teach and help along[,] on the sentimental softening - all this is what gives the book its force: for beneath the conventional religion and morality of her day, the writer is dealing with good and evil and the perennial struggle between character and environment. 13

The incident chosen for more detailed discussion is the one which occurs after Amy has burnt Jo's precious book of writings. Jo swears never to forgive her and when Amy follows her when she goes skating with Laurie, she does not warn her about the dangerous ice. Amy falls in and is rescued, but Jo feels responsible, and confesses to her mother. Marmee consoles her by confiding that she too has a bad temper which she has to control, and gives her the following advice.

My child, the troubles and temptations of your life are beginning, and may be many; but you can overcome and out-live them all if you learn to feel the strength and tenderness of your Heavenly Father as you do that of your earthly one. The more you love and trust him, the nearer you will feel to him, and the less you will depend on human power and wisdom. His love and care never tire or change, can never be taken from you, but may become the source of lifelong peace, happiness, and strength. Believe this heartily, and go to God with all your little cares, and hopes, and sins, and sorrows, as freely and confidingly as you come to your mother. (p. 74)

This incident was selected because it gives the reader the opportunity to express opinions on Jo and Amy's behaviour and to attempt to understand the reasons for their behaviour. It also provides an "excuse" for finding out what the reader thinks about the Christian messages which are sprinkled throughout the book. The book is indubitably sentimental in parts and has been criticized for this reason on the grounds that sentimentalism mars art.<sup>14</sup> It is not the aim of this study to discuss aesthetic standards in great depth, but it appears that Alcott's art lies in the fact that the rest of the book is able to carry the moralism (and whether or not this happens will be investigated in the interviews). This ability is indicated by Janeway's comment which also contains a suggestion of feminism.

For this Victorian moral tract, sentimental and preachy, was written by a secret rebel against the order of the world and woman's place in it, and all the girls who ever read it know it.<sup>15</sup>

The respondents are able to understand why Jo was angry and they suggest that they would also have been angry in Jo's position, but would not have allowed their anger to endanger Amy's life.

Interviewer : You said that Jo should've warned Amy even though she was cross. So you could understand her being cross, but you think she should've been more responsible?

Lyndall : Yes, because Amy could've died just because she was cross.

Interviewer : Which of the two did you think was right?

Lyndall : Well, neither of them was right. Amy shouldn't have burnt the book and Jo should've warned her, but it was a bit more serious for Jo.

Interviewer : Would Jo have forgiven Amy if she hadn't fallen through the ice?

Lyndall : Well, she probably would've, but it would've taken a long time.

Interviewer : So she needed something drastic like this to make her think about what she was doing?

Lyndall : Yes.

- Interviewer : Why do you think Jo didn't warn Amy?
- Cathy : She was so cross that she didn't really think about anything else, she was just thinking about her anger against Amy.
- Interviewer : Was it a big enough thing that Amy had done to justify her being angry for so long?
- Cathy : Well, it had been her treasure and they were very poor and so they only had one thing they could treasure, so I do think it was quite a big thing that Amy did. Amy knew this was Jo's treasured thing.
- Interviewer : Would Jo have stayed angry longer if something drastic hadn't happened?
- Cathy : Yes, probably, because the anger was still inside her building up.
- Interviewer : And do you think that sometimes it needs something drastic to make people realize what their bad temper can do?
- Cathy : Well, it does help because when there's something drastic ... she might've drowned, so you think ... well, burning a book and saving a life, there's a big difference.

Although Amy has burnt Jo's "treasured thing", this is shown to be insignificant against the possible loss of life. Although Lyndall and Cathy state that they would also have been angry, they do not suggest alternative "punishments" for Amy and while agreeing that Jo would have stayed angry they clearly disapprove of her anger. There is therefore an understanding that reciprocal action for wrong-doing is not a solution to the problem. Amy deserved to be punished, but "She couldn't bring back the book, so she'd just have to show Jo that she was very sorry" (Lyndall). Motivation for behaviour is also considered when judging the seriousness of Amy's "crime". Although Lyndall and Cathy differ in their decision on whether Amy's action was deliberate or impulsive, both agree that planned wrong-doing is worse.

- Interviewer : Why did Amy burn Jo's book? Was it deliberately planned or done on impulse?
- Lyndall : I think it was just on impulse.
- Interviewer : Is that better or worse than if she'd planned to do it?
- Lyndall : Well, better, but it was still wrong.

- Interviewer : Did Amy burn the book on impulse or did she plan to do it?
- Cathy : Yes, I think she did plan it because as Jo walked out she said, "I'll pay you back."
- Interviewer : Is it worse to plan something deliberately or to do it on impulse?
- Cathy : It's worse to plan it, I think, because you've got more time to think about what the worst thing is.

They are able to recognize that wrong-doing is not absolute and that there are degrees of wrongness - even if the wrong action is the same, the reasons for doing wrong make the action better or worse. This is a reverse understanding of Kohlberg's idea that people are capable of a morally "good" action, but do not always perform that action for moral reasons. Finally, Jo's mother's advice is discussed. Both Lyndall and Cathy say that it was good advice and are asked why they think this.

- Lyndall : Well, it's good to try and hold back your temper.
- Interviewer : What else did her mother tell her?
- Lyndall : That she also had a temper.
- Interviewer : And how did that help her?
- Lyndall : It helped to know that she wasn't the only one with that problem.
- Interviewer : What did Jo's mother tell her?
- Cathy : Not to take it out on ... um ... she had the same problem and when she married Jo's father she had to keep it in not to show her children she was bad-tempered, so she just kept it in and it disappeared. So Jo should do the same thing.

Although Jo's mother gives religious reasons for her ability to control her temper and encourages Jo to seek God's help when she feels angry, the respondents do not appear to have noticed this element of her advice. They stress the fact that Jo's mother has the same problem and seem to feel that Jo's identification with her mother's problem is what encourages her rather than her



mother's advice about how she controls her temper. It appears therefore that the religious element, far from being found to be intrusive, is either not noticed or noticed but ignored. It does not appear to be overtly rejected because the girls enjoyed reading the book and expressed interest in rereading it, which they would not suggest if they disliked certain sections. The moral values portrayed in this section (the need to control one's temper and the need to forgive) are accepted as right by the respondents, so they reveal their ability to reason about right and wrong and to consider motivation for behaviour even though they do not use overt religious reasoning. It can be said that the author has successfully conveyed moral values to these respondents, but that she has failed to convince them of the religious motivation she imparts to moral behaviour.

#### 4.3 ENID BLYTON

Much controversy surrounds the work of Enid Blyton which can obviously not be explored in depth here, but a brief examination of the polarity of views is useful as a background to the two works selected for analysis.

The critical difference in opinion seems to revolve around the question of whether Blyton is harmful or not, and this is reflected by the attitude of critics to the way in which she portrays moral issues. Are her books "morally sound [because] right always triumphs, and the child characters are real and normal, and act in much the same manner as the children who read the books"<sup>16</sup> or are they "mediocre, calculating, morally deceitful children's literature,"<sup>17</sup> which reflect "some of the nastier

traits of children of the middle-classes"<sup>18</sup>

Tucker, who examines children's literature from a developmental psychologist's perspective, adopts a tolerant attitude to Blyton and sees her works as necessary to children in a developmental sense, likening her to a children's equivalent of Agatha Christie<sup>19</sup> in being well-ordered and predictable. He does not attempt to deny her escapism, but concentrates on the positive contributions which he regards her to have made to children's development. Apart from her social impact (charitable work encouraged by the societies which she founded for children), Tucker stresses the importance of the positive self-image which her books create in readers, as she

constantly presented children with a flattering and jolly picture of themselves in stories where they regularly outwit adults, prove competent beyond their years, and in short have it nearly all their own way. Buying a Blyton book ... was buying a good image of oneself and the world, where exciting things could happen almost to order, and where nasty repercussions could be kept well under control.<sup>20</sup>

Although this image is a false one Tucker does not regard the deception as important because he suggests that the child senses<sup>21</sup> the escapism.

Sarland uses the responses of children to Enid Blyton to suggest that the emotional involvement which Blyton elicits from younger readers enhances children's experience of symbolic play. Because of the conventions Blyton employs in her formula writing children are offered "frameworks for possible futures into which they can<sup>22</sup> 'adventure'." He agrees that this type of fiction enables children to make the link between symbolic play and narrative fiction; it enables them to grasp outside realities by relating

them to their existing mental concepts. He stresses the positive cognitive function of formula fiction, but ignores the question of content. It appears that he regards the facility of reading which Blyton undoubtedly offers to be of paramount importance.

Blyton's critics tend to emphasize her literary ineptitude and the ideological themes evident in her works. Her literary ability is not an issue in this study, but her moral standpoint is of concern, particularly because she herself was forthright in her views on the subject as the following extracts indicate.

I do not write merely to entertain, as most writers for adults can quite legitimately do. My public do not possess matured minds - what is said to them in books they are apt to believe and follow, for they are credulous and immature. Therefore I am also a teacher and a guide (I hope) as well as an entertainer and bringer of pleasure. A best-selling writer for children (particularly the younger ages) wields an enormous influence. I am a mother, and I intend to use that influence wisely, no matter if I am, at times, labelled 'moralist' or even 'preacher'. And my public, bless them, feel in my books a sense of security, an anchor, a sure knowledge that right is always right, and that such things as courage and kindness deserve to be emulated. Naturally, the morals or ethics are intrinsic to the story - and therein lies their true power. 24

Her belief that the morals are intrinsic to her stories is disputed. She further claims:

all the Christian teaching I had, in church or Sunday-school or in my reading, has coloured every book. I have written for you ... most of you could write down perfectly correctly all the things that I believe in and stand for - you have found them in my books, and a writer's books are always a faithful reflection of himself. 25

There is no danger of employing the intentional fallacy here when the author's intention is made blatantly obvious! Quite apart from the fact that Blyton's private life did not conform

to the ideals she portrayed, her contention that her works were coloured by Christian teaching and reflected her beliefs lays her open to critical evaluation of the moral tenor of her stories.

Inglis's view is precisely the opposite of Sarland's. He too deals with Blyton's effect (or, in his case, lack of effect) on the imagination, but his assessment is more closely linked to the moral dimension. He posits that Blyton "precisely occupied the frame of moral reference of her own books"<sup>26</sup> and this certainly echoes what the author herself seems to suggest, but he sees it as a narrow and negative frame of reference which instead of stimulating the imagination produces works of one-dimensional reflections of the world so that in his view "children read Enid Blyton in order to avoid 'using their imaginations'".<sup>27</sup>

It has been noted that she is able to reflect with "discomforting accuracy ... some of the nastier traits of children of the middle-classes",<sup>28</sup> but she does so in a way which implicitly condones rather than creates awareness of the undesirability of their snobbery; there is a "tendency to give approval to thoroughly bad natural instincts - to corrupt, in fact".<sup>29</sup>

Specific moral situations are examined in the discussion of the two works. The first is one of a series of books written about the same characters and is therefore examined in the light of formula fiction, whereas the second story is a single attempt at a realistic story about juvenile delinquency.

#### 4.3.1 The Mystery of the Disappearing Cat

The story is one of a series about a group of children, the Five

Find-Outers and Dog, who solve mysteries in their school holidays. The plots differ circumstantially, but a regular feature of each story is that the children always outwit the village policeman, Mr Goon, in a most humiliating fashion. Outwitting the police is a common theme in detective fiction (e.g. Dorothy Sayer's Lord Peter Wimsey inevitably solves the case before the police do <sup>30</sup>), but it is generally not accompanied by ritual humiliation of the unfortunate policeman. Ray discusses Blyton's portrayal of Goon in another story in the series.

The most regrettable lapse of taste comes in the character of Mr Goon, the village policeman, and there is some justification for all the criticism made of this particular character portrayal. The children's attitude to Mr Goon is quite deplorable and seems totally unnecessary to the unfolding of the plot except possibly to give slightly more urgency to their detective activities. <sup>31</sup>

Even Tucker (whose generally positive response to Blyton is outlined above) does not condone her portrayal of Goon, although he wrongly describes him as an enemy of the Famous Five. He points out that because of Goon's stupidity no one

questions the cruelty with which he is teased, or ever displays any compassion for him during the final humiliation he is always made to suffer when dressed down by his Detective Inspector - in this case a particular friend and social equal of the Famous Five." <sup>32</sup>

The sport of "Goon baiting" which the Find-Outers enjoy would be an unfortunate but understandable reflection of the children's character if confined to children, but when Goon's humiliation is given the official stamp of approval (implicitly by the author and explicitly by Inspector Jenks) it acquires the taint of class consciousness.

In this story the children discover that one of Lady Candling's

Siamese cats has been stolen by Topping, the gardener, who has tried to put the blame on his assistant, Luke. Goon believes Topping and when he discovers the Find-Outers in the cats' cage, he assumes that they are also involved and reports them to Inspector Jenks. Fatty, the leader of the group, informs Jenks that they have solved the mystery and they all meet at Lady Candling's house. Goon is expecting the Inspector to reprimand the children, but instead he allows Fatty to describe how they discovered Topping's involvement. Topping confesses, but as Goon leads him off, the Inspector reprimands Goon in front of all present.

"You do not seem to have shone at all in this case, Goon, he said. "You appear to have made enemies of those who were on the right track, and to have actually made friends with the thief himself. I hope in future you will be a little more careful. I trust you agree with me?"

"Er - yes, sir; certainly, sir," said poor Goon, looking very woeful all of a sudden. "Did my best, sir."

"Well, very fortunately these children did better than your best, Goon," said the Inspector. "I think we can be very grateful to them for their work in solving the Mystery of the Disappearing Cat. I hope that is your opinion too, Goon?"

"Oh yes, sir," said Goon, purple in the face now. "Very clever children, sir. Pleasure to know them, sir." (pp. 125, 126)

The questionnaires introduce the idea of the relationship between Mr Goon and the children, and the incident described above is discussed in the follow-up interviews.

Amy likes Mr Goon as a character because he is silly and funny, but she thinks that if she were one of the Find-Outers she would dislike him.

- Interviewer : Mr Goon wasn't pleased about the fact that the children solved the mystery. You said if you were Mr Goon you would also have been cross with the children, so did you think they treated him fairly?
- Amy : Yes, well, if I was the policeman I would say that the children mustn't interfere in the policeman's work.
- Interviewer : So he deserved it because he wasn't firm enough?
- Amy : Yes, he wasn't clever enough.
- Interviewer : And what kind of person do you think he was inside?
- Amy : Well, I think he was a nice person, but he was a bit stupid. But he was a nice person.
- Interviewer : Why do you think the children didn't like him?
- Amy : Because he kept telling them to shoo and to stop interfering.
- Interviewer : Was that a good reason for disliking him?
- Amy : Yes.
- Interviewer : If you were one of them would you also not like him?
- Amy : Yes.
- Interviewer : But if you were in the policeman's position how would you regard them?
- Amy : I would think that they shouldn't interfere.
- Interviewer : So if you had to judge as an outsider, who would you say is behaving best?
- Amy : The children.
- Interviewer : Why?
- Amy : Because the children want to have fun so they can.

Margie dislikes Goon because of the way he behaves towards the children and thinks he should have left them alone.

- Interviewer : Do you think they treated him with respect?
- Margie : No.
- Interviewer : Do you think they should have?
- Margie : Um, well, I wouldn't because he's such a pain. (Laughs.)
- Interviewer : So you don't think he deserved to be treated with respect?
- Margie : No.
- Interviewer : Do you think you would've behaved like the children?
- Margie : Probably. (Laughs.)
- Interviewer : And do you think that's the right way to behave?
- Margie : Yes.

She suggests that Mr Goon should have allowed the children to solve the mystery, then decides that he had to do his job, but

concludes, "Well, I probably would've left them alone because it's quite nice to see small children doing that."

Both Margie and Amy identify strongly with the children. Although the question of social class does not emerge from their responses, Goon is clearly viewed as intellectually inferior to the children and is therefore regarded as being undeserving of respect. In moral terms Blyton's characters operate primarily on an egocentric level; they solve mysteries and bring criminals to justice not because they have strong moral values but because they enjoy the self-importance which it brings. Although Margie sees that her suggestion that Goon should have left the children to solve the mystery alone is impractical, her feeling for the children overrides her logical assessment that he had to do his job. Amy claims that she would also have told the children not to interfere, but when asked for an objective evaluation, she sides with the children. Her reasoning is purely egocentric: "Because the children want to have fun so they can." It seems therefore that although Amy and Margie are able to reason cognitively about the interaction between Goon and the Find-Outers, their decision about the "rightness" of behaviour is influenced by emotion rather than reason.

When the reprimanding of Mr Goon is discussed, Margie feels that Jenks should not have done it in front of the children, but does not indicate that it should not have been done at all. Amy not only thinks that it should have been done in public, but that it is more effective.

Interviewer : Do you think Inspector Jenks treats Mr Goon fairly?



- Amy : Yes, I think he should tell him off because he didn't suspect his friend.
- Interviewer : How do you think Mr Goon felt about being told this in front of the children?
- Amy : I think he must've been quite upset.
- Interviewer : So do you think that Inspector Jenks should've reprimanded him in front of the children?
- Amy : Yes.
- Interviewer : Don't you get upset if someone picks you out in front of the class?
- Amy : (Laughs.) Yes.
- Interviewer : So which do you think is better, to be told in front of other people or on your own?
- Amy : In front of others because it makes you ashamed.

This seems to indicate that Goon is not viewed as an ordinary adult would be, as it is considered right that he should be made to feel ashamed in front of the children. Clearly there is a distinction between the adult and the child assessment of Inspector Jenks's (and by implication Enid Blyton's) attitude towards Goon. Whereas adult critics have indicated that they view this as a class bias, the children's responses indicate that Goon is viewed as stupid and, because he is bad at his job and allows children to solve mysteries before he does, he needs to be reprimanded. The absence of class-consciousness in the children's responses does not absolve Blyton of the moral responsibility of having created the nasty situation, because it remains a nasty situation whatever the supposed justification for Jenks's behaviour is thought to be, but it does indicate that the class question need not be a major issue. As Wright points out, "Enid Blyton's books were written for a middle-class that probably didn't exist then and certainly doesn't exist now." <sup>33</sup> The international success of the many translations of her stories is puzzling if the class snobbery is considered to be an essentially English characteristic, but if children respond egocentrically ("It's funny so I like it") instead of cognitively (i.e. reasoning about Goon's

status), then the enjoyment of the nastiness of the children can be seen to be the result of the universal egocentrism of children and not their class consciousness.

It is impossible to make generalizations about Blyton's influence on children from the two responses above, but the egocentric appeal of her writing is clear from other evidence. To suggest that she influences or encourages children to think egocentrically might be too far-reaching a conclusion to draw, but it is evident that in this story (and others which conform to the same formula), although the children solve the mystery and catch the criminal, the reader is not stimulated to think deeply about questions of right and wrong.

#### 4.3.2 The Six Bad Boys

This story which concerns juvenile delinquency has been described as a rare but unsuccessful attempt at social realism on the part of Enid Blyton,<sup>34</sup> but the Chairman of a Juvenile Court praises it in the foreword.

This book should help to deter children from doing what they know to be wrong, for they will learn from it that consequences are serious and severe. But it will especially help those who are bringing up children not to do the very things which cause them unhappiness, and to provide for them that love and serenity and happiness for which they crave. (pp. 7,8)

35

It seems incredible that not only Blyton but also the Chairman of a Juvenile Court should imagine that the book would be read by and have an influence on adults as well as children.

The story contrasts the home backgrounds of three families, the "normal" Mackenzies, the Berkeleys whose father leaves home

because of his wife's bickering and Bob and his widowed mother, Mrs Kent. Whereas the Mackenzies provide a "proper" home for their children, the Berkeley's broken home and Bob's mother's decision to go out to work are shown to be directly instrumental in causing Tom and Bob to "go wrong". Bob resents having to go home to an empty house, and one day when his mother asks him to light the fire because she is bringing a friend home, he smashes the crockery in a rage and leaves the house in a shambles. He refuses to apologize and threatens to do it again, so his mother locks the door and he has to wait for her to come home before he can get in. She leaves him food in the garden shed, but he will not eat it. "Leaving out food for me as if I was the cat next door!" he grumbled to himself. "I'll wait till she comes home, and have supper - proper supper, even if she has to cook it when she's tired." (p.101) Bob becomes a member of a gang and Tom (who is constantly away from home to avoid the unpleasantness) also joins. Patrick, one of the gang members, robs a newsagent's till, ostensibly to get back sixpence which he claims the man short-changed him, but he takes more money which the gang leader, Fred, makes him share. Although Bob does not want to take their money, he decides to take it and somehow return it, but when the youngest Mackenzie, Pat, has her appendix removed he uses the money to buy her presents. When Tom finds a wallet, the money is shared similarly, but the notes are traced by the police and the boys are brought before the Juvenile Court. During the court proceedings their home backgrounds are examined and shown to be largely responsible for their actions. Tom is sent away to an Approved School, but Bob whose mother wants nothing more to do with him, is allowed to live with the Mackenzies on probation.

The story ends rather unrealistically one year later. Mr Berkeley has returned and all but one of the boys show a positive influence from the "proper" home they now have. This rather lengthy synopsis of the story is necessary to show how Blyton uses the theme of home influence to illustrate the boys' moral deterioration. At best her attitude can be viewed as naive or simplistic. Ray comments:

Although Enid Blyton manipulates her characters for the sake of her message (she could quite well have shown Bob enjoying being on his own and helping his mother instead), the young reader has no difficulty in seeing why the boys behave as they do. 36

It is ironic that the book which Blyton clearly intended adults to read and derive benefit from has received most severe criticism. Cadogan and Craig refer to it as

perhaps Enid Blyton's nastiest story; she has taken, unusually, a "topical" theme, and sentimentalized it, bringing to the problem of juvenile delinquency an attitude dispiritingly retrogressive. ... Having got hold of what she believed to be a serious, psychological truth the author could not leave it alone. 37

In her attempt to show the deficiencies of Tom and Bob's homes, Blyton displays a strong anti-feminist stance. Mrs Kent is shown to be unnatural when she is annoyed by Bob's behaviour.

Bob couldn't very well help trying to be the man of the house. He had a strong, determined nature, and no father to check it. He loved his mother and wanted to look after her, and the last thing his father had told him was to play the man and run things for his mother. (p. 33)

The Mackenzies see this as natural behaviour and rather patronizingly decide that "he'd be all right in a proper family, like ours." (p. 29) Presumably Mrs Kent would have received less

disapprobation had she gone out husband-hunting instead of job-hunting!

The feeding of their children is another way in which Tom and Bob's mothers are shown to be deficient. Bob's mother gives him sandwiches to take to school and leaves food in the shed, and Tom's mother does not produce birthday cakes like Mrs Mackenzie's. However, Barker's comment that "the author makes the implication that a mother who fails to provide food (among other creature comforts) is likely to produce a delinquent child"<sup>38</sup> is somewhat exaggerated to suit his amusing article.

Discussion of Bob's mother arose spontaneously during the interviews when the question of the boy's behaviour was raised. Not surprisingly, both Gemma and Rory blame Bob's mother.

- Gemma : Yes, he [Bob] was good in the beginning, but when his mother started going off to work and sort of leaving him alone and being horrible to him he changed because he didn't really have a mother who cared and wanted him.
- Interviewer : So you think that was the influence that made him change?
- Gemma : Yes.
- Interviewer : Why do you think she didn't care about him?
- Gemma : She was away the whole day so she didn't want to have anything to do with Bob.
- Interviewer : She was working so that she could buy better things. Was that a good reason?
- Gemma : No, well, you work for yourself, your own food and warmth and shelter and for your children and family. And she just worked for herself.
- Interviewer : So Bob would've preferred not having more expensive toys?
- Gemma : He would've preferred to have his mother's love.

Gemma clearly sees a connection between Bob's mother's working and the withdrawal of her love. One is seen to be almost a natural consequence of the other - because she was away the whole

day "she didn't want to have anything to do with Bob". The fact that Bob was rude and unpleasant is not considered a factor in the alienation of her affection. Rory, when prompted about Bob's behaviour, admits there are problems on both sides but clearly sympathizes with Bob.

- Interviewer : You said the boys behaved like that because their parents didn't give them any attention.  
 Rory : Yes, especially Bob's mother.  
 Interviewer : So what did you think of her?  
 Rory : As a mother? Well, I thought she treated Bob badly because to have no one to come home to in the afternoon and you get no lunch and Bob was an only child so he should at least get some company.  
 Interviewer : So you think his mother was to blame for the way he behaved?  
 Rory : Yes, especially when Bob brought her flowers. She just took it.  
 Interviewer : And do you think he behaved well towards her?  
 Rory : No, well, he was cross and he should've been cross, but he shouldn't have reacted so badly.  
 Interviewer : So were there problems on both sides?  
 Rory : Yes, from both of them.  
 Interviewer : And do you think if they'd spoken to someone else they could've sorted things out?  
 Rory : But Bob's mother wasn't concerned. She was just worrying about her own friends and her job.

Once again the job is seen as the main threat to their relationship. Both respondents evidently do not have working mothers, but it is interesting to speculate on what their responses might have been if they had. Would they make a connection between their own mothers and Bob's or would the story seem too far removed from reality? Whether or not the children make the transference of their disapproval of Bob's working mother to all working mothers was not explored, but Blyton's influence in putting across a strong message about working mothers cannot be dismissed as casually as the social class question was. Whereas the class snobbery she portrays is regarded as existing no longer, working

mothers do exist and therefore the question of whether the working mother is right or wrong becomes a pertinent moral question. The problem with the situation in this story is that it poses no moral question, and therefore children are unlikely to give the matter much thought because it seems logical to accept the viewpoint depicted by the author.

The incidents involving the stolen money were discussed in detail during the interviews. Both Gemma and Rory felt it would still have been stealing if Patrick had taken only the sixpence which he claimed was his and Gemma regards his motive for taking more money to be revenge: "He wanted to get his own money and he wanted to pay the man back for what he did so he takes some more money." The children show a clear understanding of the motivation of the gang members in doing wrong - they can understand why they do wrong although they do not approve of it. Although this is not sophisticated moral reasoning, it does indicate an awareness about the complexity of moral decisions.

Interviewer : You said if you'd found the wallet you'd have handed it to the police and asked for a reward, but why do you think Tom didn't do that?

Rory : Because if he'd done that they'd have called him a chicken and they wouldn't want him in their gang any more.

Interviewer : And do you think that was a good reason?

Rory : Not really, he just wanted to show them he was brave and could do whatever they did.

Although Gemma sees Tom's reasons for taking the wallet to be "because he was unhappy in his family", she recognizes in Bob the same reasoning that Rory sees in Tom - the need to be approved by his peer group.

- Interviewer : If Bob (because he didn't want to keep the money at first) had stood up to them and said, "I'm not going to keep my money", how do you think they would've reacted?
- Gemma : I'm not sure. I don't think they'd think he was very nice any more.
- Interviewer : So he did it because he wanted to be "in" with the gang?
- Gemma : Yes.

Tom and Bob can be regarded as using reasoning similar to Kohlberg's instrumental purpose and exchange reasoning. Their actions are geared towards what will benefit them. Tom could have kept all the money, for example, but by sharing it with the others he gains their acceptance and approval which is more important to him than the money. Bob uses the stolen money to buy presents for Pat and her family. Gemma and Rory both regard this as a good reason for keeping the money.

- Gemma : It was a good reason for keeping the money, but he shouldn't really have taken it.
- Interviewer : It was still wrong then?
- Gemma : It was still a little bit wrong, yes.

- Interviewer : When Bob used the stolen money to buy presents for Pat you said it was a good reason.
- Rory : Yes, because he was getting no pocket money and he promised to buy her a doll.
- Interviewer : So do you think you can sometimes turn something that you've done that's wrong into something good?
- Rory : Maybe, maybe not, it depends.
- Interviewer : Would it have been worse if he'd broken his promise?
- Rory : Yes, and then he might not have had another friend.
- Interviewer : So he did it because he wanted to keep her as his friend?
- Rory : Yes.

Rory views Bob's action here in utilitarian terms. He had to keep the money in order to keep his promise, but his promise is kept not because it is regarded in terms of a moral standard, but because by breaking it he may lose his friend.



The principal moral message that theft is wrong whether you do it because you are poor or because you are unhappy is apparently clearly received by readers and because Blyton attempts to show why the boys behave as they do, her readers are encouraged to consider the boys' motivation. Their moral thinking is confined to acceptance of the author's outline of how the problem situation develops rather than participation in the solution to the problem. The depiction of the moral solution, "the proper family", inhibits the moral imagination of children because it presents the reader with an ideal and absolute solution which is unrealistic. Children cannot all belong to a "proper family" as envisaged by Blyton (as she well knew because her own home was a broken one <sup>39</sup>), but she offers little hope to those who do not. Much of Blyton's "bad" morality can be attributed to unintentional reflection of her views, but even when she addresses a moral problem as intentionally as she so obviously does in The Six Bad Boys she fails to create a situation in which the readers are stimulated to exercise reason about the moral problem.

#### 4.4 SUSAN COOPER. THE DARK IS RISING

The central character of the book is Will Stanton, an 11-year-old boy, who because he is the seventh son of a seventh son has special powers and becomes one of the Old Ones, who represent the Light. The powers of evil, the Dark, are rising in an attempt to take over the world, and Will is chosen to find six signs which will help to conquer the Dark. The quest for the signs takes Will into the past so that he can see how and where the signs were stored before he retrieves them in the present.

Once Will has the sixth sign, the Dark is vanquished by Herne the Hunter, the signs are joined (forged together with gold chains by the blacksmith) and returned to Will because although the Light has won, the Dark will rise again. Merriman, one of the Old Ones explains to Will:

The Dark is vanquished, at last, in this encounter. Nothing may outface the Wild Hunt. And Herne and his hounds hunt their quarry as far as they may, to the very ends of the earth. The Lords of the Dark must skulk now, awaiting their next time of chance. But for the next time, we are this much stronger, by the completed Circle and the Six Signs and the Gift of Gramarye. We are made stronger by your completed quest, Will Stanton, and closer to gaining the last victory, at the very end. (p. 249)

This central theme of the struggle between the forces of the Light and the forces of the Dark is also the theme of the other four books in Cooper's "The Dark is Rising" sequence. This struggle can be viewed as a futile one if its purpose is misinterpreted. Philip claims that the "great struggle between Light and Dark is never put into any precise relation to everyday life, to humanity"<sup>40</sup> because at the end of the fifth volume he feels that nothing has changed. He quotes, "Good men will still be killed by bad, or sometimes by other good men, and there will still be pain and disease and famine, anger and hate."<sup>41</sup> This he views as failure on the part of the Light to have achieved any effect, but this need only be viewed as failure if the Light is seen to be fighting for Utopia, for an unreal world, which of course it is not. The supernatural forces of both the Light and the Dark invade the real world,<sup>42</sup> but their purposes are different. Whereas the Dark seeks to control the world, the Light seeks only to conquer the Dark, not the world. Whereas Philip seems to imply that the final conflict should have been

Armageddon-like in its vanquishment of the Dark, Cooper's concern appears to be that the world should return to normal. Her characters (and her readers) return to the real world "to the firm ground where people must add two and two, carry in fire-wood, stamp dates in books, and tie their shoelaces in the morning".<sup>43</sup> It is a real world in which the problem of evil still exists, but hope exists too. Philip did not complete the quotation. It continues: "But if you work and care and are watchful, as we have tried to be for you, then in the long run the worse will never, ever, triumph over the better."<sup>44</sup>

The struggle between Light and Dark is related to a concept which is implicit in Cooper's work, that of free choice, and free choice can surely be regarded to have "precise relation to everyday life".

Although Will does not choose to be an Old One (it is, in fact, predestined at the time of his birth), he is not automatically equipped by virtue of his status to fight the Dark. He has to learn to be an Old One and he has to make important choices and sometimes makes a bad choice which places him and the forces of Light in danger.

The section selected for specific discussion involves the question of choice. Hawkin is liege man to Merriman, an Old One, and it is clear that there is great affection between the two. Part of Will's learning process in becoming an Old One entails his reading of the Book of Gramarye. In order to protect the book from men it was placed behind a pendulum in a clock which would destroy anyone other than an Old One who tried to remove the book. Merriman, however, introduced a further spell which

involved Hawkin. He would not be able to remove the book unless he had one hand on Hawkin's shoulder. If he touched the pendulum Hawkin would die, and if the Dark had managed to trick Merriman by magic the Light would have had to kill Hawkin to prevent the book from getting into the Dark's power. Hawkin had agreed to risk his life, but Merriman realizes after the book has been removed that he has expected too much of Hawkin, and Hawkin betrays him and joins the Dark after speaking to Maggie Barnes. Merriman knows that he was wrong to have trusted Hawkin, but although he can see that Hawkin is going to betray him, he does not try to stop him.

Hawkin makes the choice to serve the Dark, but when the Dark is hunted, the Black Rider throws Hawkin from his saddle and he is found by Merriman and Will. Merriman explains to him that he still has a choice.

I gave you the freedom to choose, Hawkin, and I did not take it away. I may not. It is still yours. No power of the Dark or of the Light can make a man more than a man, once any supernatural role he may have had to play comes to an end. But no power of the Dark or the Light may take away his rights as a man, either. If the Black Rider told you so he lied. (pp. 250, 251)

Hawkin chooses to return to the Light and dies at peace.

The responses indicate that the children empathize with Hawkin's feelings, although they are clearly aware that he is wrong to join the Dark. This understanding of his motives shows that they are beginning to develop an awareness of the complexity involved in moral decisions.

Interviewer : Why do you think Hawkin joined the Dark?

- Nicolas : I think he wanted revenge because he sort of took Merriman like a father and then he felt that Merriman was gambling with his life and he felt that Merriman didn't really care about him.
- Interviewer : Do you think he knew when he did it that he was doing the wrong thing or did he act because of what had just happened?
- Nicolas : I think he acted out of what had just happened and he wanted revenge.
- Interviewer : Do you think if he had stopped to consider, that he would've realized that Maggie Barnes was evil?
- Nicolas : No, he wouldn't because his head was just full of revenge so he was too mad to think about it.
- Interviewer : If you were in Hawkin's position, do you think that you would also be tempted to join the Dark?
- Mia : Yes, I think I would be tempted.
- Interviewer : Do you think Hawkin was happier once he joined them?
- Mia : (Pause.) I don't know, I'm not quite sure. I think he would have been happier if he had stayed with the Light.
- Interviewer : How do you think you would've felt if you were Hawkin?
- Adam : Well, I'd have felt quite bad actually about Merriman and I'd have felt bad when once I was on the Dark's side. I would've felt confused.
- Interviewer : Do you think it was Merriman's fault that Hawkin changed?
- Adam : Yes, I think so because Hawkin didn't feel quite secure and then went to the Dark.
- Interviewer : Do you think you can force someone to do something wrong?
- Adam : No, they have to choose.
- Interviewer : So Hawkin actually knew what he was doing when he decided to join the Dark.
- Adam : He did it because he felt betrayed, but he knew what he was doing.

There is awareness of the conflicting pressures which affect Hawkin's decision and recognition of the fact that the Dark does not bring him happiness. Because the children can understand the difficulty of his decision they are not judgemental about him. This seems to indicate some flexibility in their moral reasoning

because they are prepared to examine motivation as well as behaviour. They are able to see why he may have acted wrongly and to realize that his reasons can be valid for them as well if they were in a similar position, even though the reasons do not conform to the conventional idea of what is right. Hawkin's decision to change his allegiance from the Dark back to the Light is discussed in detail.

Interviewer : Before he dies Hawkin speaks to Merriman and changes back to the Light. What did you think of that?

Adam : Well, it's quite strange, he changed from Light to Dark and then back again. It was quite odd.

Interviewer : What do you think made him change?

Adam : He thought the Dark was good at first because he didn't actually know them so well, and then he found out they were actually quite bad.

Interviewer : So do you think he expected more power from them and he didn't get what he wanted?

Adam : Yes.

Interviewer : For what reason did he go back to the Light?

Adam : Well, he felt more secure and he didn't really like the Dark so much because they were so cruel and powerful.

Interviewer : And was it important that he made this decision before he died?

Adam : Yes, I think so, because he changed to the Dark and he realized that he'd done the wrong thing and so he changed back before he died.

Interviewer : Why do you think Hawkin came back to the Light?

Nicolas : Because then he thought about it later on and he realized that the Dark was no good, and it was evil and he got nothing out of it 'cos Merriman had said, "If you side with the Dark you'll be thrown down again."

Interviewer : You said he got nothing out of joining the Dark. Do you think he'd get anything out of coming back to the Light?

Nicolas : (Pause.) I think he might've got something if he'd lived.

Interviewer : Do you think it was important that he changed before he died?

Nicolas : Yes.

Interviewer : Why?

Nicolas : Well, if you were on the good originally and you go onto the bad, then it's better if you realize your mistake and go back to the good and try and do whatever you can before your death.

Interviewer : So you think he felt more at peace when he did that?

Nicolas : Yes.

Nicolas and Adam agree that it is important that Hawkin made the decision to return to the Light which indicates an assumption that man should have the doing of good as an ultimate aim. They recognize that the Dark has let Hawkin down ("he got nothing out of it") and that in turning to the Light he cannot get material benefits, but he does find peace before he dies. (In a sense it is Hawkin who has to forgive Merriman and in forgiving him the choice of allegiance is made.) The children are able to see that although good and evil are absolutes, those who follow the opposing sides do not conform to absolute roles and even a decision to follow the Dark is not absolute because the choice to make a decision to change is always available.

An interesting diversity of response was evident when I attempted to find out to what extent the children were able to relate fantasy to real life. Mia, who finds the book "rather boring" and admits that she prefers the Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew stories because they are closer to real life than fantasy, does not see a close connection.

Interviewer : What did you think about the division that was made between people of the Light and people of the Dark?

Mia : I think this made the book more interesting, because it was a bit boring, but it made it more interesting because there were like two sides to the whole thing.

Interviewer : Do you think that, as in this book, there are forces of good and evil in the world fighting against each other?

- Mia : I'm not sure.  
 Interviewer : Do you think that it is made stronger in this book than it really is?  
 Mia : Yes.  
 Interviewer : Would you say that there are people as bad as the people of the Dark in real life.  
 Mia : I don't think so.

Adam responds positively to question 12 on the questionnaire (Do you think this book has helped you to understand yourself or other people better?) which indicates that he is able to appropriate the story into his cognitive experience.

Yes, in some cases it does help me understand myself and other people. This [is] because I like to compare myself to Will and other people to the characters. I also like to imagine what I would do.

His written response provides evidence of his use of two of Harding's categories of response, <sup>45</sup> empathizing and evaluation, and his verbal response shows that he is able to relate the struggle between good and evil in the book to a real life situation.

- Interviewer : Did you think that the division between Light and Dark might have any bearing on what real life is like?  
 Adam : In some ways it did because like at the moment there's been a lot of war between the townships and the whites, the policemen and the blacks.  
 Interviewer : How do you think the story has any bearing on that?  
 Adam : Well, they're both trying to gain power, you see, and both fighting a lot, and the whites are trying to gain power and the blacks are also trying to.  
 Interviewer : So because people are trying to gain power do you think that there's wrong on both sides?  
 Adam : Yes.  
 Interviewer : And what could they do instead of fighting?  
 Adam : Have like a competition or something and then the one who wins ... If they win and the others aren't pleased they can have another one, but if they're not pleased they'll probably just start fighting again.



Interviewer : So you think there are other things that you must try instead of fighting?  
 Adam : Yes, they could negotiate or something.

Although Adam makes the connection between the struggle in the book and the political situation in real life, his suggestion of a competition (which even he realizes is an inadequate solution) shows that he does not comprehend the implications of the situation and therefore he settles for the cliché "they could negotiate or something". The value of his response does not lie in his ability or inability to suggest a solution to a problem (which politicians have not solved) however, but in the fact that his imagination has been stimulated beyond the confines of the plot of the story. The story does not provide a blueprint of action to combat evil, but the essence of the "message" of the book (that good can overcome evil) seems to have been abstracted by Adam. The fact that he is unable to apply it in a practical way does not negate the value of his attempt to do so.

Nicolas's response relates the struggle between good and evil to a personal struggle.

Interviewer : Why do you think the division between the Light and the Dark was so important to the book?  
 Nicolas : (Pause.) Because if the world was full of evil then you couldn't really live properly.  
 Interviewer : So do you think that in a way although this is a fantasy story that it tells us how we can live in the real world?  
 Nicolas : Yes, I suppose so 'cos if anything goes wrong and the world is bad then nothing will go right.  
 Interviewer : Do you think there are people in the real world who are as evil as the Black Rider?  
 Nicolas : There are mainly two sides to a person, a good side and a bad side, but sometimes bad sides overtake the people, so not really. Some people might have the same sort of ways, but there is a good side to them.  
 Interviewer : So they're not totally evil like he was?

- Nicolas : No.  
 Interviewer : And do you think that if people want a lot of power, they can lose sight of their good side?  
 Nicolas : Yes.  
 Interviewer : So do you think because of having a good side and a bad side that you actually face a choice in your life?  
 Nicolas : Yes, you do, because if you live a good life and live properly then ... Well, if you live a bad life, then you won't be happy when you die.

Nicolas accepts that good must be dominant over evil to enable people to live properly and he regards unhappiness as a consequence of living a bad life. His idea that people have a good side and a bad side is a further indication of his realization of the fact that people do not conform to absolute roles.

The responses show that children see doing good as essential for the continued well-being of the world. When asked about what helped Will and Merriman to do what they thought was right, Nicolas answers, "Maybe because they were good people and didn't want the world to go bad and sour and everything go wrong for the world." The children are therefore able to reason on a social rather than a personal level (what Kohlberg would term Stage 4 reasoning). Good behaviour is not simply that which avoids punishment or gains the approval of others but that which benefits society. Nobody (except the Old Ones themselves) ever knows what Will and Merriman have done for the world, so their motivation cannot be personal - they act for the good of society.

This book depicts a struggle between the Light and the Dark which encourages readers to think about right and wrong, good and evil, but the situation is not viewed in a simplistic way. Although good must triumph ultimately, the difficulties which the people of the Light encounter are realistically portrayed, so that the

triumph of good is not shown to be an automatic process, but the result of the actions of people like Will and Merriman who do the right thing at the right time. The consequences of following the Dark are clearly depicted (e.g. Hawkin's predicament), but without moralism because a "wrong" choice bears its own inevitable consequences which do not have to be pointed out to the reader.

#### 4.5 MADELEINE L'ENGLE. A WRINKLE IN TIME

This book addresses the problem of good and evil at a cosmic as well as a personal level. Meg and her brother Charles Wallace go to another planet, Camazotz, to rescue their father who has been trapped while experimenting with time travel. They and a friend, Calvin, are taken through space by means of tessering (wrinkling) by three supernatural beings, psychopomps,<sup>46</sup> Mrs Whatsit, Mrs Who and Mrs Which. Although the children's mission is a personal one they are shown a wider perspective of evil when the ladies show them a dark shadow which inspires them with fear. They learn that their father is behind the shadow and that they will have to travel through it to get to Camazotz. Later they are shown the earth which is obscured by the Dark Thing and are told that their planet has produced some of the best fighters against the Powers of Darkness, and the children list the fighters, from Jesus through artists and scientists to Gandhi, Buddha and St. Francis. Meg is more interested in finding her father and is told that Camazotz has given in to the Dark Thing.

On Camazotz they find that everything and everyone conforms to a certain rhythm - those who do not are punished. The controlling rhythm is the pulsation of a naked brain, IT. Charles Wallace is

taken over by IT when he tries to find out where his father is. He reasons like IT and tries to persuade the others to go into IT as well. They refuse and he takes them to a glass column in which Mr Murry is trapped. Meg frees him and Charles takes them to IT where Meg manages to withstand IT's power for a while, but as she is about to give in her father tesseracts them out leaving Charles Wallace behind. Meg is disillusioned and angry.

She had found her father and he had not made everything all right. Everything kept getting worse and worse. If the long search for her father was ended, and he wasn't able to overcome all their difficulties, there was nothing to guarantee that it would all come out right in the end. There was nothing left to hope for. (p. 150)

Her father tells her "we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose", but she blames him for leaving Charles Wallace behind. They attempt to describe the three ladies to the beasts on the planet and Calvin calls them angels, messengers of God. They arrive on the planet but explain that they cannot save Charles Wallace, and Meg realizes that she will have to go back. The ladies give her "gifts". Mrs Whatsit gives Meg her love, Mrs Who recites a biblical passage (1 Corinthians 1: 25-28) and Mrs Whatsit tells her that she has something which IT has not. She realizes that she has love and by loving Charles Wallace she manages to get him away from IT's power.

The biblical references create a spiritual atmosphere which L'Engle acknowledges although she claims that she wrote the book "as a violent rebellion against Christian piety", intending it to be "an heretical book, of what I thought was a possible universe.<sup>47</sup> It turns out as not an heretical book at all." The book is

certainly not pious because the Christian element is present in a non-prescriptive way. Ironically, like Mrs Who's gift to Meg (that God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise and the weak to confound the mighty) which gave Meg strength although she did not fully understand it, the strength of the spiritual element lies in the fact that it does not present a spelled-out message. L'Engle has been accused by Dixon of drawing religion "into the world-wide political struggle"<sup>48</sup> (because some readers see Camazotz as an allegorical communist state), but his criticism seems to be directed at religion for religion's sake because he contradicts this viewpoint when he criticizes C.S. Lewis for using religion "as a retreat from great moral and political problems".<sup>49</sup> L'Engle does not appear to be using religion politically because although the idea of the sovereignty of love over evil may be a religious one, it is Meg's personal love which reaches Charles Wallace, her individuality which overcomes conformity, which is certainly not the understanding Dixon seems to have of religion. Meg does not succeed because she is perfectly good but because she puts her faults (anger and stubbornness) to good use in withstanding IT's power.

Meg's rescue of Charles Wallace formed the major part of the discussion because it raised the idea of love overcoming evil and IT's inability to understand the concept of love.

- Interviewer : Why do you think the fact that Meg loved Charles Wallace made IT unable to do anything?
- Anwar : Well, normally if you love someone you want to help them if they're in danger and they probably had a very close relationship and she didn't want to lose him. Because she was so stubborn she wanted to rescue him.
- Interviewer : And could IT understand love?
- Anwar : No.

- Interviewer : And how did that help?
- Anwar : Well, if IT could understand love, it could probably think of a way to like counteract the attack, but because IT couldn't understand the meaning, it had to stick to its old ordinary plan of keeping Charles.

The idea that IT cannot understand love is linked to the reasons for IT's behaviour. IT is seen to be threatened when people do not conform. Stewart agrees that if people were not all the same they might question IT and "many people wouldn't want IT there."

- Anwar : IT probably wanted everything to be perfect and didn't want people to be different. He wanted them all to be the same and if they were different they'd most probably react against him.
- Interviewer : What made him think this? Do you think he was afraid?
- Anwar : Yes, because he knew there was like good around and he didn't want to be destroyed.

There is therefore a general understanding of IT's power and influence as well as a particular understanding of the way in which he affects the Murry family. Fiona senses this power when she likens IT to Satan because "he controls the other world", and Stewart relates desire for power to real situations.

- Interviewer : Are people who want power prepared to do evil things to get that power?
- Stewart : Well, it depends what kind of power they'd like. If it's a big power and they'd be ruling a lot of the world or something then they could but if it was a small thing they might not.
- Interviewer : Can you think of an example?
- Stewart : Well, like the Second World War when Hitler wanted more power over Germany and to spread Germany, he started killing people for it.

The negative effect of power is clearly understood, but there is also awareness that power need not always be abused. (Do you think that if you have absolute power you'll always use it badly?

Anwar: No, you don't have to.) The idea of love overcoming evil is further related to the real world in considering how evil is usually combated and in examination of the effects of love as an agent of change.

Interviewer : Does it happen in real life too, that you can fight evil with love?

Anwar : Well, it depends.

Interviewer : What is the usual way of fighting evil?

Anwar : Well, it depends what kind of a situation you're in, because sometimes people fight them with weapons.

Interviewer : Is that a good way?

Anwar : Well, not really because you just kill one another.

Interviewer : So it just goes on and on?

Anwar : Yes.

Interviewer : How do we normally fight evil in real life?

Matthew : Well, I suppose by using a different type of evil. If they want to use some type of bomb and you retaliate by dropping your own type of bomb, I suppose that is using evil back to fight evil.

Interviewer : And do you think that that is effective?

Matthew : It works, but it is not very clever because then the other people will think that they have to get us back so it isn't peaceful, so they will just try and get people back straight away.

Interviewer : Do you think that in real life you could use a situation where love could be stronger than evil - instead of fighting evil with more evil you could use love?

Matthew : I think so. It depends again whether it was a lot of people or a strong group you were trying to persuade. Then I doubt whether it would be possible, but if it were only a few people or one thing it would be possible.

The children recognize that reciprocity has deficiencies in certain situations. The principle that love should be used to overcome evil seems to be accepted as a valid one, even though the details of how it should be put into practice are not clear. The practical aspect of love is considered when its ability to change people is discussed. Meg's love for Charles Wallace makes

her realize that she has to go back to rescue him even though she is afraid. She has to choose to go back of her own free will and although the choice involves great risk,<sup>50</sup> her decision itself gives her the strength she needs to put into practice the power of her love. IT's capacity for change is also evaluated.

Interviewer : In real life can love overcome evil like what happened in the story?

Fiona : Yes.

Interviewer : How do you think it happens?

Fiona : Well, if you love someone very much and they don't like the thing you're doing, because you love them so much you might change it because you don't want to lose them.

Interviewer : And do you think that it would be possible to love IT and that IT could change?

Fiona : No.

Interviewer : Would evil people in the world ever change?

Fiona : Well, they could I suppose.

Interviewer : What would make them change?

Fiona : Well, if someone does it to them so they will understand how bad it feels.

Interviewer : Is it always a good thing to show people how horrible they are by doing the same thing to them?

Fiona : No, not always, because sometimes it means that you just go on and on being horrible.

Fiona thinks that IT is too evil to change. She recognizes that change can be brought about by reciprocal reprisals but realizes that they are destructive. Matthew thinks that IT was "much too powerful and lost in a world of his own to change" and in relating IT's power to real life says, "I shouldn't think that people in Soviet Union would change if someone told them to." He regards change as possible but as his previous response reveals he is rather vague about how it will occur. Stewart thinks that IT (and even Hitler) might have been changed by love and relates the influence of love in real life to the political situation.

Interviewer : Do you think that if someone could show love



- towards IT, although it would be very difficult, that IT might change?
- Stewart : Yes, I think so.
- Interviewer : Could evil people in the world change if people showed love towards them? If you go back to your example of Hitler - do you think he might've changed?
- Stewart : Yes, I think so, and also like what's happening in this country. The government isn't showing any response or anything to the blacks.
- Interviewer : So if people took the trouble to show love towards others it might change things?
- Stewart : Yes.
- Interviewer : And is it easy to love people in real life?
- Stewart : If you've always lived with the person it would be, but if he just came as a stranger, it wouldn't be.
- Interviewer : How can people try to love others?
- Stewart : They should be kinder, and as I said about the blacks, they should let the blacks mix with the whites and not just keep away because of the colour of their skins.
- Interviewer : Do you think that people will always respond to love?
- Stewart : People who have thought blacks are those sort of people [i.e. inferior] and they must stay there, I don't think they would respond.
- Interviewer : Would they never change then?
- Stewart : (Pause.) They might.

Stewart views the lack of love and understanding in the political situation as the evil that must be overcome, so love must be part of the practical solution because its absence is the problem. He sees love as an essential ingredient for peace, but his assessment of its effect is realistic (and perhaps even tinged with cynicism) because he does not feel that it is easy to show love or that everyone will respond to it. Nevertheless, he has spontaneously related the principle suggested in the book to a complex real life situation and, although he is able to see that his solution is neither simple nor perfect, he has been able to give a practical dimension to the values absorbed from the book.

The more concretely Biblical concepts and references seem to be less clearly understood. Like Meg the respondents cannot fully

comprehend the meaning of Mrs Who's gift to Meg, but sense its value. (Anwar: It probably helped her in a way. Stewart: I think it probably gave her more encouragement. Matthew: She did know ... that she did have someone backing her.) Fiona is the only one who gives an overtly religious response: It meant the secret of God's ways is that God is all powerful and that God works in a mysterious way. When prompted as to how this helps Meg she is at first uncertain and then suggests that "She must've used God's love too" (to free Charles Wallace). Fiona is therefore able to recognize the practical implications of the gift in religious terms whereas the others only sense the spiritual support. Calvin's description of the three ladies as angels is discussed and a comment by Forbes on the supernatural characters in L'Engle's books seems pertinent.

These characters are servants, just as much as Charles Wallace or Meg. And though not always stated, the person they serve is God. L'Engle gets that across through the smell of the story, if in no other way. 51

Fiona is able to accept the angel symbolism, but Matthew has some difficulty in the identification of the "smell".

Interviewer : It's mentioned that Mrs Whatsit, Mrs Who and Mrs Which are like angels. Is that a good description?

Fiona : Yes, because they sort of guarded her all the time.

Interviewer : What do you think the role of an angel is?

Fiona : Well, I sort of think that they're sort of sections of God and they guard you and keep you from doing bad things.

Matthew : I wouldn't have thought angels from heaven but angels of their business or whoever ...

Interviewer : So how would you normally describe or imagine an angel?

Matthew : More like, well not dressed up in blankets and not reciting things in Latin. I don't know, more sort of peaceful I suppose.

Interviewer : Do you think it could be said they were doing God's work although it didn't mention that they were working for him?

Matthew : Well, they were doing good but ... they may have been doing God's work, maybe what he would have wanted to happen, but I doubt if they were working for him.

Interviewer : So who do you think they were working for?

Matthew : Well, it must have been some other organization because they knew all the other places and where everyone was, and they were maybe angels in his or her work.

Matthew is prepared to acknowledge that what they were doing was "what he would have wanted to happen" but is unable to accept a direct relation to God. He does not reject the notion of God's involvement in the story (i.e. he does not find the combination of God and fantasy inappropriate), but he adopts a practical rather than symbolic approach to the angel question - even their appearance disturbs his concept of what an angel should be. He has recognized their essence, that they are agents of goodness, and this seems more important than an ability to categorize them into a religious hierarchy. The "smell" of goodness gets through. The story provides a framework in which evil is overcome by love. Although the struggle is shown to be a cosmic one with other planets involved either in giving in to the Dark Thing or fighting it, the importance of each personal struggle is highlighted by Meg's decision to return alone to rescue Charles Wallace. Meg's decision signifies a process of character development in her recognition of the fact that she can no longer rely on her father to make everything all right.

Responses indicate that children agree that love can overcome evil and that they are able to relate the principle to real life at various levels of reference. It is difficult to attempt to

analyse the moral reasoning employed by the children because the concept of love is an abstract one which seems to transcend categorization. This does not imply that the children do not use moral reasoning, but merely that their moral thought cannot be conveniently categorized in Kohlbergian terms. Their acceptance of the idea that love can overcome evil and can be related to personal and social relationships shows an awareness of the need for co-operation between different groups of society, and their suggestions of how these relationships can be made to work indicate that their thoughts have been stimulated by what they have read. They also show signs of absorbing the religious atmosphere of the book and have presumably accepted the integration of religious values and references although their direct influence is not evident. For some respondents the references can be said to be incidental rather than integral - yet their tone is accepted.

L'Engle presents a view of good and evil which despite its cosmic implications involves the reader in the idea that the struggle between good and evil is not some distant disembodied concept but something in which every reader can choose to participate in real life. The fact that respondents related their answers to social issues like war and racism negates the criticism often directed at writers who portray this struggle between good and evil, namely that they encourage children to ignore social problems because of the spiritual emphasis. The charge of escapism cannot be upheld in relation to these responses.

#### 4.6 C.S. LEWIS. THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE

C.S. Lewis can be regarded as the most identifiably Christian

of the fantasy writers in this study in that the Christian element, although it is not overtly present, is readily recognizable to adult readers of The Chronicles of Narnia who are conversant with the Christian gospel. Lewis himself claims in a letter to James Higgins that the works are not allegorical.

The Narnian books are not as much allegory as supposal. "Suppose there were a Narnian world and it, like ours, needed redemption. What kind of incarnation and Passion might Christ be supposed to undergo there?" 52

Hooper explains that both Lewis and Tolkien claimed that their books were not allegories because "they were<sup>1</sup> using the ancient definition of the term: by allegory they meant the use of something real and tangible to stand for that which is real but intangible", and although love and patience can be allegorized, an attempt "to represent what Christ would be like in Narnia is to turn one physical object into another (supposed) physical object - and that is not, by Lewis and Tolkien's definition, an allegory."<sup>53</sup> Whether or not it is called allegory, there is a very definite Christian element in The Chronicles which once identified cannot be ignored. Whether the presence of this Christian atmosphere constitutes moralism, however, is debatable. It has been said of Lewis that his work is "brittle, mechanical,<sup>54</sup> and naggingly preachy"<sup>55</sup> and "overtly moralistic"; yet other critics claim that "the religious philosophy and ethics are very subtle and do not interfere with the true fantasy of the stories"<sup>56</sup> and that although children do not respond to the values at once they will respond to the narrative sweep, the heroic mood and "the constant eliciting of the numinous".<sup>57</sup>

It is possible to read the stories without making a direct connection between Aslan and Christ, but a large part of the "moralistic" problem is the attitude of well-meaning but misguided adults who seize on the books as "good Christian literature" and proceed to "enlighten" children as to the Christian meaning. As with the moral values in traditional fairy tales, Lewis's Christian meanings should be discovered by children themselves if they are to have any moral worth. It is probable that children who never come to the categorical conclusion that Aslan equals Jesus will derive greater moral benefit from the story than those who have been instructed to see Aslan as representing Jesus and will therefore accept moral dilemmas rather than explore them. The fact that people may use Lewis's books in a moralistically obtrusive way does not mean that he intends them to be so used. Lochhead makes the following point:

Only those ignorant of the creative process could believe that he deliberately set out to "say something about Christianity to children", using fairy-tale didactically and patronisingly. It would be more accurate to say that fairy-tale used him. 58

David Holbrook's article "The problem of C.S. Lewis"<sup>59</sup> is a particularly harsh critique, but the Freudian analysis is too intense to warrant general discussion and in my opinion too ridiculous to be taken seriously. I am inclined to agree with Hooper's comment that "although there is a problem, it is most certainly not Lewis's."<sup>60</sup> Gough echoes this view in his article<sup>61</sup> "C.S. Lewis and the problem of David Holbrook" in which he points out that Holbrook's assumption that Narnia is an "inner world" of "psychic reality" is a misunderstanding of the nature

of Narnia because the "moral problems of a Narnian's life are identical with those in a life in our world."<sup>62</sup> Although Gough denies the relevance of Holbrook's psychoanalytic argument, he counters it using reasoning dependent on Freudian symbolism which demonstrates that it is not even psychoanalytically valid. His refutation of Holbrook's suggestion that events in Narnia are determined and that the protagonists have no opportunity to exercise free choice will be discussed when the story is analysed.

The story presents a clear division of good and evil as the inhabitants of Narnia comprise two groups, those who follow Aslan, the lion, and those who follow the evil White Witch. When the children first enter Narnia through the back of a wardrobe, Narnia is in the witch's power and she makes it "always winter and never Christmas." (p. 23) There are rumours that Aslan will return and the White Witch tempts Edmund into betraying his brother and sisters by giving him magic Turkish Delight and promising him more when he returns with them. The children are a threat to her because of a prophecy which foretells the end of her reign when four humans gain the throne. Edmund returns with the others and while the beavers are talking about Aslan's return he slips away to tell the White Witch where they are. She decides to kill Edmund to prevent the prophecy's fulfilment, but Aslan's followers rescue Edmund.

Aslan offers himself as a sacrifice in Edmund's place when the White Witch demands Edmund's death on the basis of "deep magic from the dawn of time". Because of his knowledge of "deeper magic from before the dawn of time" Aslan knows that by sacrificing

himself, he will be able to break the witch's power. Aslan is killed on the Stone Table, but returns to life, joins the others in battle against the witch and her followers and kills the witch.

Discussion centres on Aslan's sacrifice and the motivation for Edmund's and the witch's followers' behaviour. All the children interviewed cite Aslan as a favourite character and automatically side with him against the White Witch. (Ben: Well, you wouldn't really like to be on a wicked person's side.) The bad characters are seen to be motivated by desire for power (Ben), the need to conform (Lucinda: I'm sure that some of the animals would have thought that this wasn't right, but they would just do what the other animals do.), and a combination of their natural evilness and fear of the witch. (Fiona: They were evil and they thought they'd be turned into stone if they didn't follow the witch.)

Interviewer : Why did the witch's followers behave the way they did?

Rory : Well, she probably taught them and they followed her example. She taught them all to be mean.

Interviewer : And say somebody tried to teach you to be mean, would you follow his or her example?

Rory : I don't know. No, I don't think so because I just know I shouldn't be mean.

Interviewer : So you know what's right and wrong but why didn't they know?

Rory : Well, I just think the White Witch overpowered them and gave them such an enchantment that they couldn't do anything else.

Interviewer : Do you think they were happy following her?

Rory : I don't think they were sad because she was so powerful. I don't think they would've been completely happy though because she was quite mean to them.

There is recognition that one can resist being taught something evil, but the power of the White Witch is seen to be too strong.



The respondents condemn the witch's followers, but they show that they can understand why they have chosen evil or else succumbed to evil because of weakness. A similar attitude is shown towards Edmund.

Gough refers to Edmund as "a complicated example of free choice." He chooses to be bad, but redeems himself by free choice by fighting courageously in the battle against the witch.<sup>63</sup> Although Aslan physically saves him, his moral redemption occurs by an act of his own free will.

Edmund has chosen to be bad even before he goes to Narnia. "Edmund could be spiteful, and on this occasion he was spiteful." (p. 29) He is also known to tell lies and to be "beastly" to children smaller than he is. Fiona recognizes that both his character and the magic Turkish Delight contribute to his behaviour.

- Interviewer : Would Edmund have gone on following the witch if she'd given him more Turkish Delight?
- Fiona : Yes.
- Interviewer : Was it only the fact that she treated him horribly that made him change? Why did he fight on Aslan's side at the battle?
- Fiona : That was ... (pause) because he saw the witch being evil, so that's why he knew.
- Interviewer : So Edmund himself was not really evil?
- Fiona : He wasn't evil, but at the beginning he was teasing that other girl.
- Interviewer : If he'd been a very good person and hadn't teased Lucy, could the witch still have exercised her power over him?
- Fiona : Um ... (pause) probably, but not for as long.
- Interviewer : And if one of the other children had gone?
- Fiona : Well, the girl wouldn't have done that.
- Interviewer : What would've made her stand up against the witch's power?
- Fiona : Love.

Fiona is able to distinguish between Lucy and Edmund's characters and she reasons that Lucy's love for her family would be stronger

than her desire for Turkish Delight whatever magic properties it might have. Edmund's decision to betray his family is dependent on his own choice and cannot be entirely blamed on the witch's power because he could have withstood her power. Fiona sees the change in his character to be a result of his recognition of Aslan's "goodness" and because "the witch was very horrible to him." When the idea of Edmund's being faced with a direct conflict between good and evil is raised, Fiona is uncertain about Edmund's choice, but thinks he would have chosen good.

- Interviewer : If the witch had continued giving him Turkish Delight do you think he'd have been able to see Aslan's goodness when he met him?
- Fiona : I don't really know. He probably would've changed and been good. He probably would've betrayed the witch then.

The questionnaire raises the question of whether Edmund knew that Aslan had died in his place. Only one respondent (Ben) thinks that he did know and attributes his change in behaviour to that knowledge. André's response is interesting. "No, I don't think he knew but Aslan did tell him a bit in a way which he could not understand. I think this because God told his disciples he was going to die, but they didn't understand." André appears to be suggesting that Edmund sensed rather than understood Aslan's sacrifice, but his relating Edmund's inability to understand to the disciples' inability to understand Jesus shows an interpretive approach to the Christian element in the story. Edmund is not a disciple-like character (he cannot even be said to resemble Judas), yet André is able to see a relation between him and the disciples in one instance. He is able to appropriate one aspect of the gospel story without feeling the need to make a fixed

correlation between Edmund and the disciples. This indicates that his response is an emotional rather than intellectual one - it is not important that Edmund does not "fit" the disciple description completely.

Lucinda feels that Edmund did not really understand what the consequences of his betrayal would be. "I don't think he would have done it if he knew what was going to happen, but he didn't know." She sees the reason for his change to be that "he knew he had got into a bad spot" and he wanted revenge against the witch, and she feels that his change in behaviour will be permanent because if he started doing something wrong, "I'm sure that this story would come back into his mind and he would stop." Lucinda's understanding of Edmund's change in behaviour can be seen to be less spiritual in nature because she does not directly connect the change with Aslan. His desire for revenge against the witch can be regarded as indicating reciprocal reasoning and the reason for his continued change in behaviour is that he would stop if he thought back to what had happened, which implies a fear of its happening again. His change is therefore not so much a result of the positive influence of good as a desire to avoid the negative consequences of evil (Kohlberg's avoidance of punishment reasoning).

Whereas Lucinda excuses Edmund in a way (because he didn't know what was going to happen), Rory does not think that the fact that he liked Turkish Delight and wanted more was a good enough reason for doing what he did, and sees his change in behaviour as directly influenced by Aslan.

- Interviewer : What made Edmund change his ways?  
 Rory : I think he liked Aslan and he really thought Aslan was good and ... I don't know, I don't think he knew Aslan had gone [in his place].  
 Interviewer : But just meeting Aslan had made an impression on him?  
 Rory : Yes, obviously, just everyone could see what he was like.  
 Interviewer : So that made him decide?  
 Rory : Yes, because he liked Aslan more than the witch.

Like Fiona, Rory recognizes that when Edmund is faced with a choice between the witch and Aslan, he will choose Aslan because "obviously" he had made an impression on Edmund. In Rory's opinion therefore Edmund's change involves his choice to be on Aslan's side, the side of goodness.

The implications of Aslan's decision to submit to being killed by the witch are discussed. The respondents recognize Aslan's desire to save Edmund from being killed as his primary reason, and when asked why he was prepared to do it when Edmund had been so horrible, two responses refer directly to the goodness of his nature and the other three show the respondents' awareness of the wider implications of his sacrifice. Fiona says that he agreed to be killed because he had two lives and Edmund did not, but does not think it was easy for him to die. She gives his reason for wanting to save Edmund as "because he wasn't horrible." Rory also feels that it was not easy for Aslan to die even though he knew he would come back to life, and stresses his kindness as the reason he was prepared to save Edmund. "Because he was so kind. I don't know, he was just kind." Fiona and Rory regard Aslan as inherently good and therefore his decision to help Edmund is seen to be a direct and natural consequence of his goodness.

Lucinda views his action as more far-reaching than simply helping Edmund because "he was doing it for the rest of the land."

Interviewer : How did it help the rest of the land?

Lucinda : Because the land had always been ruled by the witch and so they never saw sunlight and everyone was bossed around, and the lion didn't want his land to be like this.

Interviewer : So when he changed it what would he change?

Lucinda : Then the flowers began to come up and the snow began to melt and they were happy.

Lucinda realizes that Aslan's death helps others as well as Edmund. Andre' and Ben also recognize this. Ben refers to Aslan's death as a sacrifice and Andre' says that "Aslan wanted to put everything right and he could do it by saving Edmund." Both Ben and Andre' relate the story to the Bible and therefore their view is even more far-reaching than Lucinda's, but their religious understanding is discussed in the context of their ability to relate the story to reality. Lillian Smith writes of Lewis's stories as adventures that his readers half consciously recognize are "those of a spiritual journey toward the heart of reality."<sup>64</sup> Although Lucinda does not translate the story into biblical terms, she is able to understand that Aslan's sacrifice entails more than just saving one boy and therefore indicates an ability to reason differently from the way she does when she assesses Edmund's change in behaviour. Her assessment of Edmund's reasoning is not necessarily a reflection of her own reasoning, just as her understanding of Aslan's sacrifice does not imply that she would be willing to undergo a similar experience. She does relate the story as a whole to her own experience, however, feels that it is more realistic than Nancy Drew stories and says, "I enjoy a story that you can really relate to sort of in everyday life." She particularly likes the realistic beginning and

ending (the real world setting), but finds even the fantasy real because she thinks the characters behave realistically and she would have behaved similarly.

Ben and Andre' both relate Aslan's sacrifice to the crucifixion and Rory also likens Aslan to God although he does not specifically express the relationship in terms of the sacrifice.

Ben : Well, the story is a lot like in the Bible, like when Jesus sacrificed himself and then he came alive again.

Interviewer : Did you like the fact that it was like the Bible?

Ben : Yes, it gives a new dimension to the Bible.

Andre's response is an elaboration of his answer to the question about what he would have done if he had been watching the killing.

Andre' : I would certainly not have mocked him. I think I would probably have not had the nerve to object to anything. But Aslan wanted to die for Edmund so I shouldn't have stopped the killing. I also would have felt upset because he was my God and now there he was letting himself be killed (Written response.)

Interviewer : Why did you feel this?

Andre' : Well, (pause) it's just my feeling.

Interviewer : So you think because things happened like in the Bible that Aslan is like God?

Andre' : Yes.

Interviewer : And does this story add to our understanding of the Bible?

Andre' : Yes, because it gives you another way of looking at it.

Ben and Andre' both respond positively to the Christian element in the story, clearly do not find it moralistic and claim that it aids their understanding of the Bible. For them, therefore, the story certainly appears to have spiritual reality.

Rory recognizes reality in the story in terms of the bad as well

as the good characters. While discussing the witch's followers, he is asked whether there are people like that in real life and replies, "Yes, quite a few ... all sort of political people."

When asked to explain he says, "I don't really know, but they're mean and they just think of themselves and their luxuries." He seems to be relating the hunger for power on the part of the witch's followers to that of politicians although he is not able to express the relationship very clearly. Discussion of Aslan stemmed from a written response.

Interviewer : You said the book made you "try and be brave like Aslan when he was getting killed." Do you think that he's like an example to people?

Rory : Yes, I think he's like God teaching people ... he was showing people that they can do a lot of good and they must forgive people and things like that.

Interviewer : What's the feeling you get about good and evil and the struggle between them at the end of the book?

Rory : Well, it's quite a big struggle but evil won't win.

Interviewer : Do you think that's true in real life as well?

Rory : Yes, the evil guys, the mean guys, just think they're wonderful, but the good men will just eventually win. If you're mean you won't succeed.

The story provides a clear distinction between good and evil which these respondents recognize and they respond favourably towards the good characters, especially Aslan. They understand the motivation of the bad characters, but do not absolve them from responsibility because most respondents acknowledge that the characters choose evil and therefore bring evil consequences on themselves.

The positive response towards Aslan's goodness cannot be analytically examined because it appears to be an emotional as well as a cognitive response. Aslan's goodness is seen to influence

people, even Edmund, but he does not reason with them or try to persuade them - they follow him because of an intuitive feeling that he is good. This does not mean that the respondents do not use moral reasoning, however. When evaluating Aslan's sacrifice they are aware that he did not have to save Edmund and even though they feel that he knew he would come back to life they do not regard his death as easy. Some respondents are able to reason that his actions are for the greater good of Narnia. Their cognitive response to his actions is nevertheless dependent on their emotive understanding of his goodness and therefore cannot be categorized. In Kohlbergian terms Aslan can be said to be operating at the highest stage, Stage 6, yet I would hesitate to suggest that these respondents are using Stage 6 reasoning. They are, however, able to respond positively to someone operating at that level; however imperfect their understanding, their response is sincere.

#### 4.7 PATRICIA M. ST. JOHN

The works by this author were chosen because they combine adventure with a strong Christian message, and therefore they seemed to be suitable for discovering children's responses to overtly religious incidents. They can legitimately be termed religious works because their subject matter is transparently Christian and much use is made of symbolic language, as illustrated by the following passages.

I stared again at that inviting little path, and it reminded me of my special verse: "Thou wilt show me the path of life ... in Thy Presence is fulness of joy." And suddenly I knew very clearly what path He was showing me that afternoon, not the path that led down to the cool, dancing river,



but the one that led back over the uplands to Philippa, the path of self-denial and kindness and keeping one's promises. (RG, p. 96)

Hamid, who has learnt to read so that he will be able to read the Bible when he returns to his family, sets off on his long journey.

Hamid wasn't travelling alone; he had some companions. He had much further to travel than the others, but packed in with the crusts and the water bottle and the cherries he carried the staff of life and the bread of Heaven, and by night on the rough mountain roads his young feet would not stumble much nor stray far. (SL, p. 158)

The author does not talk down to her readers in a patronizing manner, but on the contrary tends to use references which it is unlikely that they will understand. When a kind woman helps Hamid, the incident is described thus: "Like Another long ago, she fetched a basin of water and a towel, and stooping down she washed his bruised, cut feet." (SL, pp. 48, 49) Whereas an adult may interpret the meaning of "the staff of life and the bread of Heaven" and recognize the parallel of the woman's washing Hamid's feet and Christ's washing the disciples' feet, a child is unlikely to do so.

Not all Christian references are as obliquely expressed, however. Both books contain instances of theft in which the sinfulness of the action is clearly explained, and the conversion experiences of children and their subsequent behaviour provide the reader with a fairly comprehensive outline of the basic Christian gospel and the author's understanding of its application. The way in which child readers respond to these incidents is investigated during the interviews.

#### 4.7.1 Rainbow Garden

This story is written in the first person from the viewpoint of an 11-year-old girl whose mother sends her to stay with a family in the country while she works abroad. Elaine is shy and overwhelmed by the other children, and as a result is not very popular with them. She finds a garden behind a wall after following a rainbow (the "rainbow garden" of the title) which becomes a place of retreat for her. A window of the cottage attached to the garden is open one day, so she explores, discovers a cabinet of shells and takes one for the children's museum because by pretending that she found it on the beach she hopes to gain Peter and Janet's respect. She is later horrified to discover that the cottage belongs to Philippa's family, and when a policeman comes to the door to investigate a robbery at the cottage she is so frightened that she runs into the forest.

Mr Owen, Peter and Janet's father, comes to find her and she confesses that she has stolen the shell and that she was afraid that they would find out.

That wasn't the only reason you were unhappy," said Mr Owen. "You were unhappy because you'd stolen and told a lie. Sin always makes us so unhappy. Don't you remember the story we read the other night at prayers, about Adam and Eve?" (p. 65)

He tells her that she needs to confess her sins to God, and she agrees because she wants to "walk in the light". She tells Peter and Janet and is amazed to find that they are ashamed and sorry about their behaviour because Mr Owen has reprimanded them for the way they treated her.

She befriends Philippa who cannot walk, but because she is very

demanding, she does not visit as often as Philippa would like, but she tells Philippa about Jesus and promises to visit on a particular Saturday and bring her Bible. That Saturday the children plan to go swimming at the river, but Elaine remembers her promise and goes back.

The children are questioned on the incidents of the shell and the keeping of her promise. Elaine's motivation in taking the shell is understood although it is not approved.

- Interviewer : You said she wanted the shell because she wanted them to admire her. Do you think that
- Megan : I'm not really sure because she did need them to be her friends, but I don't think she should have taken the shell.
- Interviewer : What do you think you would do in a similar position?
- Megan : I'm not sure really. Nothing like that's ever happened.

Belinda also understands Elaine's desire to gain the others' admiration, but she is more emphatic in her rejection of this as an excuse for theft.

- Interviewer : Why do you think she needed to show them that she could do something?
- Belinda : She was like a dropout compared to the others because they were all popular with everyone. She wanted to show something of herself.
- Interviewer : Do you think this was a good reason for taking the shell?
- Belinda : No. She could have done it some other way and I don't know how, but not steal the shell.
- Interviewer : So you think that it is always wrong to steal?
- Belinda : Yes.
- Interviewer : And what if someone is hungry? Is it wrong to steal then?
- Belinda : It depends, well, I'm not sure.

Belinda and Megan show that although they know that it is wrong to steal they are prepared to consider the motivating factors behind theft because they are aware of the reasoning which is

involved. Belinda is confused when the motivation of hunger is introduced because she is able to recognize that hunger is a more valid reason for theft than the desire for friendship, but she is aware of the moral conflict which this recognition creates. Megan, when questioned about the tramp who burgled the cottage, does not think that he should be punished "because he was very depressed and he was rather mixed up because of what had happened to him." Both girls show that although they accept the moral principle that stealing is wrong, they are able to understand that circumstances can influence people to act in a certain way. Wrong actions are still regarded as wrong, but the person who does wrong is not judged absolutely because motivation is taken into consideration.

The incident in which Elaine turns back to keep her promise to Philippa is discussed in order to discover how the children respond to the change in Elaine and whether they relate it to her decision to become a Christian. Both Belinda and Megan do relate the incident to her beliefs. Their responses to why keeping her promise was important were:

- |         |   |
|---------|---|
| Belinda | : Well, the girl was lame, so she couldn't do the things that she could, so she thought that she had better go and she had promised to bring the Bible to the girl. |
| Megan   | : She wanted Philippa to think that her faith in God had told her that it was right to go back.   |

They also feel that if she had not turned back, she would have affected Philippa's belief. (Megan: Philippa would have thought God makes no difference. Belinda: Philippa wouldn't believe that the Bible made any difference to anyone.) They are therefore able to recognize that the importance of Elaine's action lies not in

her obedience to the rule that one should not break a promise but in her realization of her moral responsibility, not only to God, but to the other people as well. This can be understood to be more than mere conformity in order to gain Philippa's approval because Elaine's action is seen to be far-reaching in its effect on Philippa. (Philippa later becomes a Christian.) Belinda's response indicates an awareness of the influence of peer approval, however.

- Interviewer : How do you think the Bible had made a difference to Elaine?
- Belinda : Well, she thought more how horrible she was.
- Interviewer : And how did she change from when she first came to them?
- Belinda : Well, first she was acting very much like a spoilt little girl and she actually saw how horrible she had been and she noticed that no one liked her and she was very unpopular, so she changed.
- Interviewer : So do you think her change would be a permanent thing or do you think it was only temporary?
- Belinda : Well, yes, it would be permanent if she carries on reading her Bible when she goes home.
- Interviewer : Do you think she would do that?
- Belinda : Well, I'm not sure really because she might just give in to her mother or she might not even have time to read it and would just forget about it, or her friends might not like it and she would be the odd one out.

Belinda attributes Elaine's change to a combination of her seeing from the Bible "how horrible she was" and her realization that "she was very unpopular". She acknowledges the power of peer pressure again when she suggests that Elaine may stop reading the Bible because "her friends might not like it". Her appraisal of the influences contributing to Elaine's change in behaviour indicates that although she accepts that the Bible can influence Elaine (it is interesting that she talks of the Bible's influence and not God's influence) she does not regard this influence as

all-powerful. This approach may be slightly more sceptical than the author would expect, but it can be seen to reflect the author's attempt to portray the characters and their belief realistically - Elaine does not become a saint overnight, and Peter and Janet are (somewhat harshly) shown to have failed because of their unchristian treatment of Elaine. Their father reads to them from Matthew 25 and Elaine later remembers the verse "I was sick ... and ye visited me not" when she thinks about how she has failed in her attitude towards Philippa.

It seems logical to assume that the author is using the work as a means of presenting a Christian message. It would be presumption on my part to suggest what effects she may hope to have on her readers, but the responses indicate that these children recognize the Christian element and accept it as part of the story. Both Megan and Belinda indicate that they enjoyed reading the book and Megan's reason "because I enjoyed the way Elaine became a nicer person by living with people who loved God" shows that she does not find the Christian message intrusive or out of place but regards it as an integral and essential element. Although there are passages which seem to the adult to be overly sentimental or unrealistic the children do not seem to notice them.

Although the moral issues in the book are clear-cut (promises must be kept, selfishness and taking shells are sins), the author does include the opportunity for children to exercise moral reasoning because the reasons for both good and bad behaviour are given. Because of the nature of the situations the children's reasoning tends to conform to the author's reasoning process, but the fact that they were able to suggest that the

tramp should not be punished although he had done wrong and that Elaine could be influenced by factors other than religious ones indicates that the religious emphasis in the book is not understood to be prescriptive. Right and wrong are clearly identified, but reasoning about right and wrong behaviour is not confined to absolute rules because motivation is considered. Although the author tends to suggest that the motives for right behaviour are prompted by religious reasons, the children's recognition of other motives should not necessarily be regarded as failure on their part to accept religious reasons. Their responses indicate that they do accept the integration of religious incidents in the story, but they do not totally share in the author's portrayal of morality.

#### 4.7.2 Star of Light

The story is set in Morocco. Hamid's mother tells him to take his little blind sister, Kinza, to an English nurse in a far-off city to prevent his stepfather from selling Kinza to a beggar because she is blind. She describes the visit to the nurse to Hamid and tells how she asked about a picture on the wall.

I asked her who that Man was and she said He was one called Jesus, Who was sent from God to show us the way to Heaven. She told me a lot about Him, how He healed the sick, and made blind people see, and loved all men, rich and poor, grown-ups and children. I can't remember all she said, but I know she loved the Man in the picture and wanted to be like Him ... I think for the sake of the Man in the picture she would shelter Kinza ... (p. 32)

When Hamid reaches the city he finds the house and knows it is the right place because he sees the picture on the wall. He leaves Kinza in the house because he is scared that she will not

be accepted if he is with her. The next day he joins a gang of urchins who are given supper by the English nurse, so he is able to see that Kinza is being well cared for, but he does not show that he is her brother.

He steals two eggs from the nurse but falls and breaks them because he is trying to hide them from her. He is amazed that she does not beat him or send him to prison, but washes him and gives him clean clothes. She tells him that she will forgive him if he promises not to steal again, and adds:

you could not walk with me in the light, because of your sin. The Lord Jesus says He is the Light of the World. He asks you to walk beside Him all the way and every day until you reach His beautiful bright home. But first you must tell Him about your sin, and ask Him to wash away all its stains and make you clean, just as I washed away the mud and the egg. (p. 76)

Although this incident is not isolated for discussion by all the respondents, it is mentioned because it is important in the portrayal of the progression of Hamid's belief and because of one respondent's interpretation of it.

Interviewer : What did you think of Hamid when he stole Rosemary's eggs?

Farzana : Well, I think he felt very guilty and he tried to like hide.

Interviewer : And how did Rosemary feel about it?

Farzana : Well, I don't think she was really very angry and she did feel sorry for him and she didn't mind because she loved children and she overlooked it.

Interviewer : So she could understand it, but did she make him see that it was wrong?

Farzana : Yes, but she forgave him.

Interviewer : They mention forgiveness quite a lot in the book. Is it important?

Farzana : Yes.

Interviewer : How does it relate to real life?

Farzana : Well, when you forgive too much, then someone does it again and again, and it's hard for you not to forgive, but sometimes you have to be



hard on them and teach them what not to do,  
and if you forgive all the time it can get  
very irritating.

The emphasis on Hamid's sin is glossed over by Farzana who attributes a gentler attitude to Rosemary than she displays, but in generalizing about forgiveness Farzana's attitude is harsher than one would expect it to be as a result of the influence of the book. Farzana's general response to the book is interesting because she likes it "because it was about my own religion" (Islam), but although the story tells how Hamid who comes from a Muslim family becomes a Christian, she does not seem to sense the change. She mentions Jesus when she talks about Rosemary, but does not recognize a Christian influence on Hamid.

Hamid has occasion to exercise his faith when his stepfather is seen in the city and Kinza disappears. Rosemary, who has suspected the relationship between Hamid and Kinza, persuades him to tell her where he thinks Kinza has been taken. He tells her where they came from, but is hesitant to go with her to show her because he is afraid of his stepfather. Rosemary explains that she wants to fetch Kinza so that she will be happy and learn about Jesus, and Hamid tells her that Jesus has taken away his sins and made his heart happy. She replies "Then He can also take your fears away and make your heart brave," (p. 122) and they pray together for courage. The questionnaire raises the questions why he told Rosemary about his stepfather and why he agreed to go with her, in order to discover whether the children see the connection between his faith and his courage. The respondents indicate that they do not spontaneously make the connection.

- Interviewer : You said that Hamid was afraid that Rosemary would tell his stepfather where he was, but why did he tell her later?
- Farzana : Well, he knew that Rosemary would know better and she would do the best for Kinza.
- Interviewer : Why was he able to trust her?
- Farzana : Because she was a good lady and she believed in the Lord and she was a good believer and would be able to help.
- Interviewer : And at first he was afraid to go with them to show them where Kinza was. What do you think gave him the courage to go with them?
- Farzana : Well, he knew his stepfather had Kinza and that he wasn't very pleasant and so he wanted to be with Kinza and to see that she was all right and to see his mother.

Farzana regards his concern for Kinza to be his primary motivating factor. Caroline and Raymond mention his mother and sister respectively as reasons for his decision, but acknowledge the influence of his faith when prompted.

- Interviewer : Why do you think Hamid changed and told Rosemary about his stepfather? (Pause.) What had Hamid learned from Rosemary?
- Caroline : (Pause.) I can't really remember.
- Interviewer : Well, can you remember that he decided to go with Rosemary to show them where his stepfather lived? Why did he go with her?
- Caroline : He wanted to see his mother.
- Interviewer : Yes, but he was afraid. How did he overcome his fear? (Pause.) It's mentioned that he prayed for courage. How do you think that would've helped him?
- Caroline : God would've been with him when he went.
- Interviewer : Why do you think Hamid changed his mind?
- Raymond : Maybe because, well, he cares for his sister and he doesn't want her to get hurt.
- Interviewer : At first he was scared, so what do you think made him overcome his fear?
- Raymond : Maybe because he thought that his sister was younger and well maybe he might live through it, he can stand it [his stepfather's treatment], but his sister might not stand it.
- Interviewer : And what kind of person do you think he thought Rosemary was?
- Raymond : Quite a kind person.
- Interviewer : So you think he could trust her?
- Raymond : Yes.

- Interviewer : Remember how Rosemary told the children about Jesus and that they must pray to him. Do you think that made a difference?
- Raymond : Yes, it could've.
- Interviewer : What kind of difference?
- Raymond : Well, maybe he saw how she believed and he was impressed and he believed in her.

Raymond's use of the words "could've" and "maybe" indicate that even when prompted he does not actually recall Hamid's declaration of his faith, and it is noteworthy that he suggests that Hamid may believe in Rosemary and not in God. He can see that Hamid is concerned about his sister's welfare, but he does not regard this as anything other than brotherly concern and Rosemary's influence is also viewed in human rather than religious terms. The children respond in a similar manner to questions about the change in Jenny's behaviour. Jenny is Rosemary's cousin who is on holiday with her parents. She is rather spoilt, but enjoys helping Rosemary in the dispensary. When Kinza is missing she sulks all day because her parents will not allow her to look for Kinza. Rosemary goes to tell her the news about Kinza and speaks to her about her selfishness, telling her that she has herself at the circle of her heart and she needs "to ask the Lord Jesus to come into the circle with His wishes and to turn out your self." (p. 127) The change in Jenny following her decision to become a Christian is discussed, but once again the children do not make any connection between her religious decision and her subsequent behaviour. When the question of faith is raised, they tend to concentrate on Rosemary's faith and her influence on Jenny rather than Jenny's own faith.

- Interviewer : Why did Jenny change?
- Caroline : (Pause.) Well, because she saw that the others weren't like her so she decided to change.
- Interviewer : Why did she want to be like the others?

- Caroline : So that she could do what they did.  
 Interviewer : And what were they doing that she wanted to do? (Long pause.) Well, Aunt Rosemary, what kind of person was she?  
 Caroline : She was nice.  
 Interviewer : So you think Jenny wanted to be more like her?  
 Caroline : Yes.  
 Interviewer : Do you think it was because of Rosemary's belief that she was a kind person?  
 Caroline : Yes.  
 Interviewer : How does what people believe affect them?  
 Caroline : Well, people can see what they're like and what they do and they try to copy them.
- Interviewer : Why did Jenny change?  
 Farzana : I think she changed because Rosemary talked to her and told her what she must do.  
 Interviewer : How did that help her to change?  
 Farzana : Because Rosemary would have taught her to be more like a good person and not to be so rude, because Rosemary was a good lady and I think she would've put Jenny right.  
 Interviewer : Do you think that Rosemary's belief in God helped Jenny?  
 Farzana : Yes, and I think Jenny could see that her Aunt Rosemary was so good.

Jenny's change in behaviour can be regarded as a desire to conform to what she feels is expected of her, a desire to gain Rosemary's approval. She is therefore seen to be copying Rosemary's behaviour rather than changing her behaviour because of personal changes. Raymond, who admits that if put in her position he may have behaved in the same way that Jenny does although he thinks she is selfish, regards her parents' influence as important.

- Interviewer : Why do you think Jenny behaved like that?  
 Raymond : Well, maybe because her parents were getting a lot of attention and she wasn't, like they were the centre of everyone.  
 Interviewer : And what made Jenny change?  
 Raymond : I don't know.  
 Interviewer : Do you think she was happy where she was being selfish?  
 Raymond : No, I don't because she realized later on that she wasn't doing herself any good.  
 Interviewer : When she went home would she still be less selfish? Would she remember what Rosemary had told her about how she should pray?

Raymond : Well, if she still believed ... I'm not sure.  
 If her parents gave her more attention, then  
 she would still remember Rosemary's influence.

He sees her belief as dependent on external influence. Because certain circumstances led to her being selfish (not getting enough attention from her parents), her belief is seen to be likely to be affected if the same set of circumstances recurs. Rosemary's influence is not regarded as being strong enough to overcome these circumstances. It therefore appears that although the author has presented a very definite Christian message she has failed to put it across to these respondents because they do not recognize that Hamid and Jenny have undergone a spiritual experience as well as behavioural changes. In their responses the children tend to follow the same pattern of reasoning as that suggested by the author, but they substitute non-religious reasons for her religious reasons. When Rosemary prays with Hamid she tells him that "the perfect love of Jesus in our hearts casts out fear" and this is shown to give him courage, but the children regard his love for his mother and his sister as the reason for his overcoming his fear. Whereas Jenny's change in behaviour is portrayed as desire to serve God and gain his approval, the children see the change as a desire to please Rosemary. The religious reasons are therefore given a humanistic emphasis.

It seems that children enjoy this book in spite of rather than because of the religious element. They clearly recognize good and evil characters (they approve of Rosemary and disapprove of Hamid's stepfather) and accept the need for change in Hamid and Jenny's behaviour. Rosemary's faith is accepted and its effect on Hamid and Jenny is acknowledged, but the children's own de-

clared spiritual experience is either not clearly understood or else ignored because it possibly does not seem to be as real to the respondents as the influence of an adult. The failure of the children to respond to all the religious elements of the story does not imply that they have failed to employ moral reasoning because the responses show that they have a clear understanding of Hamid and Jenny's reasoning. In Kohlbergian terms both Hamid and Jenny are operating on the conventional level (Stage 3) by seeking approval (God's and Rosemary's) and Hamid acts for the good of society (Stage 4) when he considers his mother and sister. (Even though "society" in this case is confined to the limited society of his family, his altruism is evident because he has to overcome his fear of his stepfather.) The respondents are able to reason about good and bad behaviour although they do not fully comprehend the religious motivation behind that behaviour. The responses do not reveal any antagonism towards religious elements of the story as evidenced by the favourable attitude displayed towards Rosemary. It would be incorrect therefore to suggest that the children reject the religious elements; they simply do not take them into consideration when evaluating Hamid and Jenny's behaviour. This distinction between acceptance of adult faith and non-cognisance of children's faith seem to indicate that these children cannot relate the religious experience to the child characters because their own experience probably does not provide examples of children whose faith is expressed in a similar manner to the way in which these characters express their faith. I do not mean to suggest that children are incapable of spiritual experience, but the kind of experience seems to differ from that expressed in the book.

The book introduces treatment of good and evil in moral situations presented against a background of Christian influence. The respondents show understanding of the moral situations, but do not give the religious influence the same prominence in their understanding that it receives in the author's portrayal. This suggests that overt religious incidents do not always convey to the reader the spiritual truths they embody.

#### 4.8 J.R.R. TOLKIEN. THE HOBBIT

The religious element in Tolkien's work is implicit, not explicit and although some people have drawn direct Christian parallels (e.g. Gandalf is viewed as a Christ-figure, which is reported to<sup>65</sup> have greatly annoyed Tolkien), certainly in The Hobbit there are no events which can be taken to be mirror reflections of biblical events. It is a matter of religious atmosphere, an atmosphere of goodness and wholeness which is under attack by forces of evil. Marion Lochhead explains this atmosphere as she describes Lewis and Tolkien's works.

In both, all that was kind and lovely in the old paganism, the ancient piety of hearth and fields and woods, has found a place, transmuted and sanctified, in their Christian fantasies. Even without a word of doctrine (and, in Tolkien, without any explicit Christian background or reference, in his world of hobbits and elves) they are, like MacDonald, transmitters of the Christian faith and ethos, of the sacramental sequel to the Incarnation, for the Incarnation lies in the heart and soul of their creative genius.<sup>66</sup>

Criticism of Tolkien is directed primarily at the escapist nature of his fantasy. It is claimed that he presents a false picture of reality and an inability to confront the problems of modern<sup>67</sup> life. As indicated in his essay "On Fairy-stories"<sup>68</sup> Tolkien in fact produces something of a protest against aspects of modern

society of which he disapproves, but in his escape to a better world he gives the reader an understanding of values which can be brought back to make the real world a better place.

Critics of fantasy seem inevitably to ignore or deliberately misunderstand the role of free choice in fantasy. Dixon's criticism of six writers<sup>69</sup> on the grounds that they introduce forces of disembodied evil into their fantasies and thereby suggest to children that evil is ephemeral and not found in evil social conditions ignores the fact that for social evils to exist people have to choose to perpetrate or allow them just as the evil in fantasy is present because individuals and groups choose to follow the paths of evil. Apart from suggesting racist bias by his statement "All the writers draw upon words denoting blackness or darkness to portray this evil and use 'white' and all kinds of words associated with whiteness or light to show the opposite"<sup>70</sup> (curiously he overlooks Lewis's White Witch!), Dixon claims that orcs are portrayed as inherently evil, born into a "state of original sin but without the blessings of Christianity."<sup>71</sup> His theology appears to be somewhat confused because if the orcs are born into a state of original sin so too must the hobbits, dwarves and elves have been, yet they choose good whereas the orcs choose evil. Dixon's institutionalization of evil is effectively more "escapist" than Tolkien's view of evil because, whereas Tolkien's characters bear the consequences of their moral choices, Dixon seems to imply that the evil in society can be excused because of societal conditions and so he seems to be absolving man of moral responsibility. Tolkien's portrayal of evil in an Other World nevertheless reflects the choice which people have in the real



world, and this in fact personalizes evil rather than disembod-  
 ying it.

Stibbs also ignores the moral responsibility which is invested  
 in the free choice of characters when he claims that teachers  
 who encourage children to read fantasy are "teaching pupils to  
 live in a dream world and to see themselves as powerless."<sup>72</sup>

Fantasy tends to teach just the opposite, that children or  
 hobbits when faced with a power which seems likely to overcome  
 them can find within themselves resources of strength which are  
 not fully realized until a conflict situation brings them out.  
 In a letter written in response to Stibbs's article, the  
 following statement is made:

the lessons the hobbits learn are exactly those which, Mr  
 Stibbs claims, literature ought to teach its readers. I  
 believe that they are much better taught and learned in the  
 powerful setting of epic fantasy, which presents these  
 important issues clearly, than through kitchen-sink realism,  
 which concentrates on personality development rather than  
 moral choices.<sup>73</sup>

The Hobbit is a fantasy in which personality development  
 occurs as a result of the moral choices which Bilbo has to make.  
 As Timmerman points out, "The point of a fantasy is not to  
 hand us tidy morals, but to provide us with growth by  
 experience."<sup>74</sup> Fantasy cannot be escapist in the sense of  
 leading people away from confronting problems because not only  
 is there "a keen recognition of forces of good and evil, a sense  
 of right and wrong - but also a driving necessity to act on such  
 recognition."<sup>75</sup>

Bilbo is a reluctant hero, but his process of spiritual growth is  
 dependent on his compulsion to act on his recognition of what is

right or wrong. Lochhead suggests that Bilbo's growth is not in the nature of a conversion (because he has always been a "very decent" hobbit) but a metanoia, a gradual change.<sup>76</sup>

Richardson makes the point that in Bilbo's character Tolkien<sup>77</sup> "captures the essence of daily heroism". Bilbo's heroism lies in his continuing ability to do what is required of him every day.

The story tells of Bilbo's reluctant accompaniment of a band of dwarves on their journey to the Lonely Mountain to recover a hoard of treasure guarded by Smaug, a dragon. Bilbo is employed as the official burglar of the expedition, but he is called upon to rescue the dwarves a number of times, a task made easier by his acquisition of a magic ring which makes him invisible.

When they reach the mountain Bilbo goes down a tunnel, finds the dragon asleep on a huge hoard of treasure and takes a cup to show the dwarves, but the discovery of the theft so enrages Smaug that he burns their camp and eats their ponies. The dwarves hide in the tunnel and Bilbo goes down again, invisibly this time, speaks to Smaug and gets him to show off his armoured belly which has a bare patch which Smaug does not know about - knowledge of this bare patch enables Bard to slay him later. The dwarves shut the entrance to the tunnel when Smaug attacks again and are forced to go into the mountain to find an escape route. Bilbo finds the precious Arkenstone and pockets it.

'Now I am a burglar indeed!' thought he. 'But I suppose I must tell the dwarves about it - some time. They did say I could pick and choose my own share; and I think I would choose this, if they took all the rest!' All the same he had an uncomfortable feeling that the picking and choosing had not really meant to include this marvellous gem, and that trouble would yet come of it. (p. 199)

The dwarves find their way out of the mountain, but are besieged by the elves and the men of Lake-town who demand a share of the treasure because Bard slew Smaug and for the rebuilding of the town which was destroyed when Smaug was slain. Thorin, the dwarves' leader, refuses to concede their claim, so Bilbo decides to use the Arkenstone to end the siege by giving it to Bard. Thorin agrees to exchange a fourteenth share of the treasure (Bilbo's share) for the Arkenstone but he regards Bilbo's act as betrayal and sends him away. Before the exchange takes place the Battle of Five Armies occurs and the dwarves join the men and the elves against the goblins and wolves. Thorin is mortally wounded but makes his peace with Bilbo before he dies.

Bilbo's theft of the Arkenstone and his decision to use it in an attempt to bring about peace are discussed in detail. Before the children's responses are examined, the views of two critics should be considered. Helms states, "The real climax of The Hobbit is not Bilbo's finding the Arkenstone, but his renouncing the Arkenstone." <sup>78</sup> Nitzche gives Bilbo's actions a spiritual significance.

Now both courageous and wise, the hobbit becomes a burglar in the ... spiritual sense when he battles against that proud and avaricious monster inside himself. The dragon tempts him as his serpent forefather has tempted Adam in Eden: he intimates that the dwarves will never pay him a "fair share". Bilbo succumbs, stealing the precious arkenstone (sic) to ensure that he is paid for his work. ... Only in Chapter Sixteen ... does he forget about himself in his concern for others - the elves, men and dwarves who may die from the approaching winter, starvation, or battle. He then relinquishes the arkenstone he has stolen from the dwarves to their enemies the elves and men, so that they may bargain with Thorin and end the dispute. This highly moral act redeems him. <sup>79</sup>

The discussion centres on the morality of Bilbo's actions and

Thorin's attitude to Bilbo. There is a feeling of ambiguity in the respondents' decisions about whether Bilbo was right to take the Arkenstone. Moira says he should not have taken it because "it was almost like stealing even though he was entitled to a certain amount of treasure", but admits that she might have taken it if she were Bilbo because she wanted to "get away from there." John does not really think it was stealing because "it might help for the future", but admits that Bilbo's excuse that it was his fourteenth share of the treasure was not a good reason "because he realizes it was a very precious part of the treasure and he should've left it." Andrew feels that it was stealing. "It was wrong at that time, but it turned out for better afterwards." He admits, however, that Bilbo did not know that he would be using it to help others. Michael's response shows little regard for conventional morality.

- Interviewer : You said that Bilbo should take the stone because it would make him rich. Was that a good reason?
- Michael : Yes, it's a natural thing if you see something that's ... if it's going to make you rich you'll obviously take it.
- Interviewer : Is that like stealing?
- Michael : Well, in a way, yes, but Thorin had no proof that it was his and there was much more treasure left.
- Interviewer : Was Bilbo entitled to it as his fourteenth share?
- Michael : Yes, he'd led them there and everything.
- Interviewer : Why do you think he'd joined the expedition?
- Michael : To make a lot of money, I suppose. He knew there was treasure at the end because they told him.

Whereas the others, although they can understand Bilbo's temptation, sense that he should not have taken the Arkenstone, Michael feels that the end justifies the means even though Bilbo was stealing, because he had come in search of treasure and was

entitled to it. He does recognize a change in his egocentric view of Bilbo's character when the siege is discussed because he thinks that Bilbo could have kept the stone, but used it to help them. Although he recognizes that Bilbo is helping others, there is a hint of self-preservation in his understanding of Bilbo's action because when asked what would have happened if Bilbo had kept the stone, he replies, "Well, then him and Thorin would probably have fought it out."

All the respondents feel that Thorin should have shared the treasure with Bard because if he had not killed Smaug they would not have been able to get any treasure, but they can understand why Thorin felt betrayed although they realize that Bilbo was not intending to betray him.

- Interviewer : Thorin felt that Bilbo had betrayed him. Was that Bilbo's intention?
- Andrew : No.
- Interviewer : What was Bilbo doing?
- Andrew : Trying to sort out the mess, to save everybody.
- Interviewer : Was he right to use stolen goods, something he'd got in a bad way, to try to do something to help?
- Andrew : Yes, in a way it sort of balances it out.
- Interviewer : So if people steal ...
- Andrew : Well, it depends what they steal. He wasn't really a proper thief because he thought he was entitled to it.
- Interviewer : What was he planning to get out of the bargain?
- Andrew : Freedom, I suppose; to get them to join forces.
- Interviewer : Do you think that he could've just run away?
- Andrew : Yes, he could've, but I don't think it would've been his nature to do that.
- Interviewer : Why not?
- Andrew : He had a good heart.

By recognizing that Bilbo's motives are not egocentric and that "it wouldn't have been his nature" to run away, Andrew shows that he is able to grasp something of the redemptive nature of what

Nitzche calls his "highly moral act". Bilbo is not acting for his own gain, but for the good of society even though he knows that his actions may not gain him overall approval. "He had a good heart" and therefore he was prepared to risk his friendship with Thorin in order to save the dwarves. After the battle Thorin takes back what he has said to Bilbo, and Andrew interprets this as forgiving Bilbo and states that it was not easy for him to forgive.

Interviewer : Was it important that he forgave Bilbo before he died?

Andrew : Yes, because otherwise Bilbo would be plagued with a conscience all his life.

Andrew is able to value the importance of their making peace not only in terms of Thorin's need to die a peaceful death but also in terms of Bilbo's need to be reassured that he did make the right decision.

Ryan makes the point that "the specific suggestion of the operation of a power for evil is focused here in the nature of treasure." <sup>80</sup> The treasure provides situations in the story in which moral choices have to be made: Bilbo's decision whether or not to take the Arkenstone and how to use it later, Thorin's decision whether or not to share the treasure, and the decision to join the men and the elves against the goblins.

Interviewer : Do you think that they were right to fight for the treasure?

John : No.

Interviewer : So what should they have done?

John : Well, I agree that they should've tried to get the treasure back, but I wouldn't fight to get it back.

Interviewer : Why do people fight for things like money?

John : They want to be more popular.

Interviewer : And are they happier in the end if they do get it?

- John : No.
- Interviewer : How do you think the fact that Thorin, their leader, had died affected their feelings about the treasure?
- John : They'd think that the treasure wasn't that important as when Thorin was alive.
- Interviewer : What did you think about the fight for the treasure?
- Andrew : It wasn't worth it.
- Interviewer : Was Thorin's death worthwhile?
- Andrew : No.
- Interviewer : Was there a difference between the dwarves fighting for the treasure and the goblins fighting for it?
- Andrew : Yes, the dwarves felt it was their right because it was their own treasure, but the goblins just wanted the treasure because of their greed and for power.
- Interviewer : Do you think power can bring happiness?
- Andrew : No, because it takes a lot out of you to get there and by the time you get there it's not really worth all the struggle - you get too much responsibility and too many enemies.

Both John and Andrew feel that fighting for the treasure was not worthwhile and they recognize its destructive role in bringing about Thorin's death (and almost ruining his friendship with Bilbo), and its inability to bring happiness. They are therefore able to reason beyond a simple understanding of money bringing gratification (egocentric reasoning) because they realize that responsibility accompanies riches and power.

The story provides a clear picture of the consequences of moral choices and the risk involved in the choices. The good/evil dichotomy becomes evident in the battle when the "good" men, elves and dwarves fight against the "bad" goblins and wolves, but this division is shown to be a tentative one because if the worse evil of the goblins and wolves had not come against them the "good" characters would have fought each other. Good characters are shown to be capable of making bad moral choices, but because

they are good they make reparation for their actions, e.g. Thorin makes peace with Bilbo and admits his error. "If more of us valued food and cheer and song above hoarded gold, it would be a merrier world." (p. 240) The reader is therefore encouraged to reason through moral decisions with the characters and to recognize the consequences of those decisions. The values which the author emphasizes are gently stressed and are as much discoveries for the characters as they are for the readers.

#### 4.9 CONCLUSION

It is evident from the analyses that Piagetian and Kohlbergian stages are referred to with less frequency than they were in the previous section. The reasons for this appear to be two-fold. This older group can, according to Kohlberg's expectations, be supposed to be reasoning at what he terms "higher" stages of reasoning (i.e. they should begin to reason on the conventional level). A problem with Kohlberg's developmental sequence is that the higher the stage the less concrete the definition becomes. It is far easier to identify Stage 1 obedience/punishment type of reasoning than Stage 4 social system and conscience maintenance reasoning. The second reason is one that has already been mentioned in connection with certain responses from the younger group and that is that certain responses, especially when referring to abstract concepts like love, forgiveness and sacrifice, transcend formal categories of types of reasoning. The emotional response takes on greater significance. The respondents are grappling with problems which become increasingly more complex as they realize that the absolutes good and evil are not



always present in easily identifiable absolutely good or bad characters.

Motivation for behaviour plays a far greater role in the respondent's reasoning process than it did in the younger group. Motivation for bad behaviour is considered and often understood, although it is not condoned. Respondents are also able to admit more readily that they themselves may also have behaved like the characters do, although they know that the characters' actions are wrong. Interestingly, motivation for wrong behaviour is often expressed in terms of Kohlberg's reasoning. Fiona says that the witch's followers followed her because they were afraid that they would be turned into stone (obedience/punishment reasoning) and Lucinda thinks that they knew they were doing wrong "but they would just do what the other animals do." (They are therefore seeking approval [Stage 3] although they are seeking the approval of bad characters.) A similar situation occurs in The Six Bad Boys. Rory and Gemma recognize Tom and Bob's need to be approved by the gang and although they know it is wrong to keep the stolen money, they do not want to be thought to be "chicken" by the gang. Similarly Elaine's theft of the shell is motivated by her desire to be approved by the other children. Kohlberg's reasons for moral actions can therefore be seen to be used by children to justify bad as well as good behaviour.

Perhaps because of this understanding of the motivations for bad behaviour, there is less stress on punishment as an agent of reform. Punishment is not suggested by respondents and Megan maintains that the tramp who stole from Philippa's cottage should not have been punished, even though the author sends him to jail.

There seems to be a greater awareness of the idea that doing wrong brings about its own unhappiness, that evil is self-destructive. Punishment is therefore implicit in wrong-doing; it does not have to be imposed on the wrong-doer because he or she will discover the unhappy consequences of the wrong deed eventually. There is also recognition that a wrong choice is not always absolute because the possibility for change exists (e.g. Hawkin's decision to leave the Light and then to return), but some characters are seen to be too evil for redemption (e.g. the White Witch and IT).

Responses indicate that there is diversity in the reasoning processes of these respondents. Some still reason egocentrically (Amy's idea that children should be allowed to be rude to policemen and Michael's statement that Bilbo was right to take the Arkenstone because it would make him rich) while others are able to respond to complex religious reasoning implicit in the concept of sacrifice. It is noteworthy that implicit religious reasoning is more readily accepted than explicit religious reasoning.

These respondents refute the escapist claims made about fantasy in no uncertain terms. Each of the four fantasy stories stimulated respondents to consider the implications of the fantasy story in the wider context of real life situations. They seem to be able to relate aspects of the fantasy in a general yet relevant way to similar but not identical situations in real life. The values expressed in the fantasies (e.g. love overcoming evil) are translated into real terms and applied to practical real problems (e.g. racism). This indicates that the

respondents are not being encouraged to escape from their problematic world but are escaping to an Other World where values are absorbed which they can apply to real problems in the real world. As was pointed out during the analyses, their inability to solve the problems successfully does not invalidate their attempts to understand the problem and to put the values they have absorbed into practical perspective.

It has been stressed previously that this study investigates the children's immediate responses to situations in literature and therefore assessment deals with their existing moral reasoning rather than attempting to extend their reasoning. It is evident from the responses, however, that certain types of literature have greater potential ability to stimulate moral reasoning than others. It appears that moral values are as readily and often more readily accepted and related to real life when they are encountered in fantasy as opposed to realistic literature.

## CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines conclusions which have been drawn as a result of the examination of the theoretical background to the study in the light of the practical implications suggested by the responses. The psychological and literary approaches are evaluated in terms of whether the theoretical expectations which they outline are shown to be valid when the responses of the children are considered. The analyses of responses, although partially dependent on the theoretical framework for the structure of questioning, are able to contribute to theories as a result of the content of responses.

Practical implications of the study are considered and guidelines are suggested for possible areas of related research which could not be included in this study.

### 5.2 PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH

Piaget and Kohlberg's theories of moral development were used to provide a framework for evaluation of moral reasoning. Their limitations were discussed and the children's responses bear out what was anticipated in Chapter 1, namely that children's moral reasoning cannot be conveniently categorized. The theories provide a heuristic device for understanding types of moral reasoning. There is evidence to suggest that children do reason in the ways outlined by Piaget and Kohlberg, but the diversification of responses indicates that they do not conform to

reasoning in particular stages, nor do they employ only the types of reasoning outlined in the theories. There were responses even among the younger group that defied Kohlbergian categorization and some responses seemed indicative of understanding of "high" levels (in Kohlberg's terms) of moral reasoning (i.e. when characters appear to be using reasoning indicative of Kohlberg postconventional level, respondents seem to understand this). It appears that the awareness of postconventional reasoning indicates understanding of two or more stages above what would normally be considered their stages of reasoning. Kohlberg's stage categorization outlines valid categories of moral reasoning but it does not go far enough in providing a comprehensive system covering all types of moral reasoning.

The factors suggested in Chapter 1 as possible contributors to shifts in moral reasoning were referred to in the analyses when their emphasis was specifically noticeable, but a few comments of a general nature are necessary to gain an overall perspective. These factors were over-emphasis on intellectual development, emotional influence, personality and contextual influence.

The cognitive ability of the respondents does affect their responses to a large extent because if a child misunderstands a question or is unable to relate to certain aspects of a story because it is imperfectly understood, his or her response will reflect this cognitive deficiency. Although some responses were rejected as inadequate, "weak" responses were included as a wide spectrum of response was sought. Respondents from the older group still reason egocentrically on occasion, however, and children at fairly low intellectual level are able to understand relatively

complex abstract concepts. This seems to indicate that although moral reasoning is dependent on a certain level of cognitive competence for its operation, moral development does not necessarily advance in conjunction with intellectual development.

Some responses showed that children's reasoning is affected by emotion, and that emotional influence is not necessarily negative. In some cases emotions override rational thinking (e.g. Margie and Amy were both able to make rational judgements about how children should behave towards a policeman, but their emotional reaction to Mr Goon resulted in their concluding that the children's behaviour was right [MDC interview]), but in others (e.g. Victoria and Duncan's response to the giant's death [SG interview]) emotional involvement transcends conventional moral reasoning.

The influence of personality is difficult to assess. Obviously the personality of the respondent is expressed to certain degree in the interview, but no attempt was made to analyse personality types on the basis of one interview! Personality was an important factor in the case of interviews which had to be excluded because some respondents were too shy or too abrupt (in spite of the fact that participation was voluntary) to contribute sufficient information. Not all shy responses were excluded, however, as some shy respondents were encouraged to express their opinions and these were regarded as valid contributions in the spectrum of responses.

The contextual factor is discussed in greater detail later as it is integrally related to Purves's audience component. The respondents answered questions on one story only, so contextual

influence could not be comparatively assessed (i.e. changes in reasoning could not be linked to the context of different stories). The context of each story was considered in the analyses. Children in the older group were able to relate the story to other aspects of their experience whereas the younger group's responses tended to be more context-bound. Leonardo, for example, was unable to conceive of anything beyond the confines of the story-line presented and when asked to suggest alternative behaviour, he simply retold the story. Leonardo is an extreme example, but children in the younger group did indicate that they accepted behaviour in the context of a story which they would not usually accept (e.g. Mr Pink-Whistle's waste of food [FR interview]).

Kohlberg's outline of religious development follows the same pattern as his developmental structure of stages of moral reasoning. What seems to be implied by his stages of religious reasoning is a notion of "religion readiness", that children's religious understanding is sequential and therefore they will not be able to understand religious concepts related to high levels of moral reasoning. This understanding of religious reasoning is limited in the same way as the moral developmental structure, i.e. by the exclusion of the factors discussed above, and particularly by the exclusion of emotion. Responses indicate that children can experience a religious "feeling" which they articulate with varying degrees of success, but which nevertheless constitutes religious response of greater complexity than their usual moral reasoning. Whereas Kohlberg's theory provides adequate scope for religious reasoning of the moralistic type (e.g. overtly didactic writers often stress obedience/punishment

type reasoning), it does not make allowances for the effects of moral or religious imagination. Children may not be able to reason cognitively about their feelings, but by a process of symbolic overlay they are able to make connections which have spiritual validity (e.g. Andre's comments about Christ's disciples not understanding him [LWW interview]). This symbolic understanding is not an indication that children who display it are constantly operating at a complex level of reasoning because there is evidence which shows that symbolic understanding coexists with literal understanding. Victoria's idea that Jesus made the flowers bloom (her own symbolic interpretation) is seen to have a literal and not a spiritual effect on the giant - she mentions the changes in weather although she is aware of his change of heart as well (SG interview). Similarly Matthew concedes that Mrs Who, Mrs Whatsit and Mrs Which behave like angels, but balks at their physical appearance - they do not look like angels (WT interview).

Kohlberg's stages of moral development are a valuable indication of some of the ways in which children reason, as shown by the diversification of reasoning evidenced in this small sample. The stages have validity if they are not accepted as absolute. The practical implications of the Kohlbergian approach for education will be discussed presently.

### 5.3 LITERARY APPROACH

The literary approach concentrated on Gunn's adaptation of Abram's theory of the history of criticism which views the standpoints taken by each group of critics as dimensions or



orientations of approach to literature. Gunn's eclectic approach to the study of literature and religion involves using the strengths of each orientation (and his awareness of the deficiencies of each) and combining them with an understanding of the hypothetical orientation of literature to arrive at appreciation of the spiritual component of literature. Fantasy and moralistic aspects of literature are seen to be the expression of emphasis on different orientation, and therefore the basis of the original orientation adopted by the writer determines to a large extent the effect the literature may have. The response to literature is therefore affected by the way in which the author expresses values. The moral issue of theft is raised in a number of stories read by the older group, but although it is safe to assume that none of the authors advocates theft, the way in which the incidents of theft are described differs. St. John stresses that theft is sin, Blyton stresses the social aspects of crime and Tolkien stresses the personal complications. The authors express the same opinion, namely that theft is wrong, but whereas St. John and Blyton outline the reasons, Tolkien's readers are left to reason about the issue themselves. This may be regarded as morally dangerous because readers may not always make the "right" decision (e.g. Michael felt that Bilbo was entitled to take the stone because it would make him rich [Hobbit interview]), but readers are exercising their own moral judgement. One of the expectations was that because of the emphasis on the pragmatic orientation moralistic or overtly religious passages would elicit a negative response from children, especially in the older group where authoritarian influence is not as strong. No overt rejection of values or ideas

was noted, however, but implicit rejection was present in that the respondents tended to ignore rather than disagree with religious or moral values which were overtly expressed. Respondents who did not refer to these passages did not make negative comments about the book as a whole either, so their non-response to the passages cannot be regarded as part of a larger non-response to the book.

In the non-fantasy works the respondents' reasoning tended to follow the reasoning suggested by the writer (although religious reasoning was not always accepted), but responses indicate that there was not much imaginative use of reasoning and therefore moral thinking was not extended by the stories. It is not possible to prove that certain stories actually reinforce certain types of reasoning or that because children respond to obedience/punishment type reasoning in a story that they will necessarily use similar reasoning in an everyday situation, but it is possible to reach the conclusion that this may be a likely effect if the ways in which other responses are related to real life are considered. It was expected that fantasy literature would be more readily accepted by readers and that it would stimulate moral thinking. Although fantasy works were generally favourably received, this response was not universal. (Mia, for example, stated that she preferred Nancy Drew stories because the events could really happen if one had enough talent [DR interview]). There is evidence to suggest that the reasoning in response to fantasy stories did tend to be more imaginative in its interpretation of the extension of situations in fantasy to real life. Respondents who expressed opinions about war, power and politics showed that they were able to relate their vicarious experiences

in fantasy to real life situations, thereby refuting suggestions by critics that fantasy literature encourages irresponsibility and escapism.

It appears that fantasy's spiritual function can far more readily be discussed by critics than it can be ascertained in responses, but the responses do indicate that there is a certain amount of spiritual awareness in children and that they are able to recognize spiritual values. Although the references to prayer and the Bible were not noted by all respondents, respondents do respond positively to situations in which good triumphs over evil and show understanding of spiritual concepts like sacrifice and forgiveness without necessarily making concrete connections with biblical parallels. Where children do make direct comparisons (e.g. in recognizing Christ figures in "the selfish giant" and The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe) they seem to be children who have a fairly extensive knowledge of Christianity. Unfortunately time and space precluded the possibility of investigation of respondents' religious background, so conclusions have to be based on the limited religious information provided by the responses. The process of spiritual discovery is not necessarily dependent on prior religious knowledge, however, because the spiritual values are not tied to any specific code of belief. Fantasy is a useful vehicle for the presentation of spiritual truths because children are free to discover spiritual values by considering the possibilities created by situations in the stories but are not forced to accept any explanations or anything beyond the confines of the story itself. If they choose to relate their discovery to specific beliefs they can be regarded as having made a further discovery as they are showing

their ability to add religious content to their perceptions.

The confirmation and disconfirmation of the expectations held at the beginning of this study highlight the important distinction between adults' and children's views. It is accepted that children's views are different to those of adults, but what this study has indicated is that children's views and what adults think are children's views are also different. This difference in adult/child orientation is closely related to the audience component in Purves's model of literary understanding. Purves's audience component raises the issue of context, and as I have already mentioned this context can be understood in two ways: the context of the respondent's collective community (i.e. the context from which the response is given) and the context in which the response is given. It is the second understanding of context that has a bearing on the adult/child discussion.

Because all respondents were interviewed by me the context in which the response was given was constant for all respondents, i.e. responses were delivered to an adult by a child. Although the adult/child, interviewer/respondent relationship was constant, the degree to which each child was affected by it differs. Respondents were made aware of the fact that there were no "correct" answers and that their own opinions were most important, but acknowledgement of this need not have lessened their awareness of the fact that their responses were being made to an implicitly authoritarian figure. Where respondents showed signs of directing their responses towards what seemed to be an expected answer and particularly when the response was noticeably incongruous (e.g. Keri's assertion that she was glad when she was

punished [FR interview]), this tendency was noted in the analysis. I am aware, however, that other responses (and possibly all of them) may have been affected by this relationship, but because the context of response delivery was constant for all respondents, comparative comments on responses are legitimate.

A very important distinction exists between adult perceptions of children's literature and the children's perceptions as expressed in their responses. My own perceptions have been shown to be invalid in some cases (e.g. my expectation that children would respond in an overtly negative way to moralistic passages), but the critical expectations of supposedly expert adults are also shown to be invalid.

Awareness on the part of literary critics of children's literature of the unconscious response which may be evoked by certain stories is a legitimate exercise in supposal if it is clearly recognized that such suggestions are confined to the realm of supposal. When the unconscious effect is regarded as an obvious and universal effect of the story, such criticism becomes dangerous assumption and often its potential relevance is lost. I shall outline two approaches which in my opinion show a little too much adult enthusiasm and lose sight of the reality of children's responses. The first is a psychoanalytical approach and the second is theological.

Holbrook, whose critical ability is rendered somewhat suspect by his puzzling references to James Bond<sup>1</sup> in his article on C.S. Lewis, presents a totally illogical critique of Lewis in psychoanalytical terms. One of the points he stresses is the harm that Lewis does to children by supposedly creating anxiety-

2

provoking castration fears. Firstly he ignores the fact that his castration theory affects only half Lewis's readers (female readers are already castrated in psychoanalytic terms and therefore have nothing to fear!) and secondly, although he refers to the symbolic nature of the frightening events leading up to Edmund's threatened castration (the witch is in fact planning to slit his throat), he does not explain why fear of castration should be more frightening than fear of having one's throat cut. His interpretation of symbols is decidedly far-fetched. He claims that

eating is very significant in The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe. The children eat the freshly caught trout with relish (and so are eating male sexual symbols). Edmund is menaced with eating Turkish Delight until it kills him (and this 'bad breast' corrupts his character); being shut up in a wardrobe is a form of being eaten; killing is carving ... 3

This type of symbol hunting adds nothing to his interpretation of the story and more importantly does not contribute to the understanding of children's responses.

Similarly, too much emphasis can be placed on theological imagery. Patterson examines the psychopomp nature of L'Engle's  
4  
characters and makes valid parallels, but then takes the symbolism too far by suggesting they are manifestations of the Holy Spirit.

Throughout the series, the symbol of wind appears as the operative spirit image, and the association of wind with each of the psychopomp figures makes clear that they are all images of spirit; indeed, the three novels may be read as meditations upon the Spirit, the divine wind or breath of the Holy Spirit in action in the world, expressed as trifold feminine wisdom, as masculine power, as angelic knowledge, and as the unifying unicorn. 5

The problem arises when what reader response theorists would consider a valid personal response becomes universalized. Patterson can legitimately claim that her mythic understanding of the characters enables her to relate (them to the Holy Spirit, or Holbrook can assert that reading C.S. Lewis provokes castration fears in him, but when they suggest that children will respond similarly, albeit unconsciously, their validity is questionable. They are concentrating on the text and their own response and ignoring the possibility that other influences affect children's (and other adults'!) responses. It is ironic that Stibbs who claims that he wants children to read books that are "worthy, didactic, even predictable, but truthful" <sup>6</sup> is prepared to consider interpretations like Holbrook's as "truth". Interestingly enough, if the sexual connotations proposed by Holbrook are seriously considered, the facts that Aslan rescues Edmund from the witch and that he overcomes his own death (seen by Holbrook as sado-masochistic sexual humiliation) indicate that if taken to its logical psychoanalytical conclusion, the story, instead of creating anxiety, actually shows that sexual fears can be overcome. This is not the point of the argument however; the point is that it is highly unlikely that children will experience the feelings which Holbrook regards as automatic and self-evident.

When children's overt responses to literature do not always conform to adult expectations, it is difficult to see how concrete assumptions can be made with any validity about their unconscious responses.

#### 5.4 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS RELATED TO FUTURE RESEARCH

It has been pointed out that the aim of this study was to investigate and evaluate immediate moral responses to situations in literature, and therefore assessment was centred on children's existing moral reasoning and no attempt was made to extend their reasoning. Responses indicate, however, that literature may well be useful to educators who want to teach moral education.

Kohlberg's suggestion that the role of the moral educator is a Socratic one because the aim is to create dissatisfaction with the children's present state of reasoning needs careful consideration. The responses indicate that some children are able to reason about certain matters in a fairly sophisticated way and therefore the moral educator would have to identify fairly specifically what aspects of reasoning would be considered unsatisfactory. The evidence of the responses seems to suggest that if moral reasoning is to be extended rather than reinforced, then the children should be given the opportunity to reason through the moral problem themselves rather than accept a moral solution presented by the author.

Attempts to teach specific moral values may be difficult to assess. In a study undertaken with the specific aim of creating more favourable attitudes to blacks among white school children, in the United States of America, children's responses immediately after the session were favourable, but when a follow-up investigation was conducted two weeks later, responses showed that children had returned to their original way of thinking, which had been assessed before the study began. A similar study conducted over a period of six weeks and involving white children



who were given books to read in which black characters played prominent roles showed that the books had little influence on children's attitudes. The general conclusion was that books did not reverse biases in either direction but did firm up existing attitudes.<sup>8</sup>

It would appear, therefore, that adult expectations on the extent of influence of literature are inflated, whether the expectations are concerned with the positive effect a book may have or the negative effect.

The distinction between adult and children's perceptions of moral issues has been discussed in relation to critical assessment of literature, but a logical implication of a negative adult response to certain children's literature is that the idea of moral censorship becomes implicit in the negative approach. Some critics deny that they are promoting censorship (e.g. Stibbs claims that he is not "for censorship" but is "for selection and advice" and will recommend "improving" novels<sup>9</sup>), but their attempts to influence young readers to read other books have indirect censorship as their aim. Other critics criticize works so severely that it is evident that their intention is to influence librarians, teachers and parents never to introduce them to children, and such critics usually apply a form of censorship by suggesting a list of "safe" books (e.g. Dixon<sup>10</sup>). Interestingly this form of censorship appears to be directed primarily at fantasy and as has been mentioned fantasy is criticized from two opposing ideological stances. Overt didacticism and moralism are criticized, but there is less suggestion on the part of the critics (except Dixon) that these works should be

kept away from children because there appears to be recognition of the fact that children will employ their own censorship by ignoring or rejecting overtly expressed values. Fantasy, however, is regarded as potentially harmful both from the Christian perspective and from the perspective of those who consider religious values embodied in fantasy to have adverse sociological and political effects. Whether fantasy is viewed as religiously or sociologically threatening, attempts to control children's reading by directing them away from fantasy may stifle their moral imagination so that they do not think morally at all. Adults who advocate moral censorship of fantasy should first take cognisance of children's responses to different types of literature before attempting to control something as elusive as reader response.

Although children were not specifically asked for opinions on fantasy or moralistic passages their responses indicate certain thinking which can be organized to represent general trends of opinion.

Responses seem to indicate that the influence of overtly religious or moralistic passages is negligible. Although children do show signs of following the reasoning processes of authors who present moral solutions to problems, they do not accept all moral viewpoints that are portrayed by authors, whether these are "good" or "bad" viewpoints. As responses to a Blyton story (MDC) indicated, respondents identified with the children who treated the policeman with disrespect, but did not display any evidence of social class snobbery, contrary to adult expectations. Children's non-response to overt didacticism indicates that

overtly didactic books do not in fact teach moral values. They may reinforce existing moral reasoning, but although often their intention may be to teach moral behaviour they often do not stimulate moral thought. It is unlikely that they would have sufficient influence to cause fixation of a particular type of reasoning unless children receive no other moral stimulation. A logical conclusion, therefore, is that moralistic literature has very little influence on children (either negative or positive) and therefore writers who deliberately set out to inculcate moral values in their readers are unlikely to achieve their aim. Similarly, parents and teachers who attempt to use moralistic literature to promote moral development in children will probably be unsuccessful. It is possible that children may agree with an author's strongly expressed opinion (e.g. responses), but this agreement with an opinion does not necessarily involve moral reasoning because the opinion is often expressed in a way that does not encourage independent evaluation of the problem. Even this negative "influence" is negligible because the moral situation is context-dependent and therefore children may accept the author's expressed opinion in the context of the story, but because they have not reasoned deeply about the issue it seems unlikely that they will relate the issues to their everyday experience. Censorship of what adults consider "wrong" values in moralistic literature appears to be unnecessary in utilitarian terms because children are not as easily influenced by moralism (whether they accept, reject or ignore it) as some critics might expect.

The antagonist stance towards fantasy has been outlined fairly comprehensively and theoretical arguments as well as evidence of

children's responses have been used to suggest that fantasy is neither a threat to religion nor a medium which encourages withdrawal from reality. Apart from stifling the development of children's moral imagination censorship of fantasy literature, whatever the motivation behind it may be, denies children freedom of choice. The freedom of choice implicit in religious adherence is ignored by both the pro-religious and anti-religious opponents of fantasy.

The radical Christian attitude that children should only read "safe" books ironically has precisely the effect that critics claim of fantasy, namely that it inadequately prepares children for life in the real world. By denying children the experience of fantasy, adults are presenting children with an insular view of society because they never encounter the possibility that not everyone holds the same beliefs. This attitude on the part of adults is morally and religiously dishonest. The responses of children in this study to the overtly religious books show that this attitude is also self-deceiving because although the children did not overtly reject the religious values, they did not always accept them. Religious values cannot be successfully forced on children. They need to be free to discover truths for themselves and to make their own choices.

Similarly, if parents or teachers share Dixon's attitude to religious or quasi-religious themes in fantasy, they should accept that children have a right to make their own decisions. Dixon's attitude amounts to a form of moral brain-washing. Merely because he believes that religion is not relevant to his experience, he wants to inflict his opinion (which includes

inconsistent criticism of religion as discussed above) on children by encouraging them to read books which give them the message that there is no religious hope. He is replacing what he regards as prejudice by a more prejudiced view. Dixon's view has been countered by the suggestion that a knowledge of the history of prejudice is more valuable for the child than a blanket ban on books of prejudice.<sup>11</sup> To deny children freedom of choice in literature and in what they absorb from literature because of fear that it will expand their moral thinking in "unsuitable" directions is ludicrous. This perception of literature as a threat places too heavy an emphasis on literature itself and belittles the role of children as participants in the literary process by ignoring the possibility that in exercising their free choice the children can choose whether to accept or reject values.

If the supposedly negative effects of literature as assessed by adults are shown to be negligible in the light of children's responses, the question of whether the supposedly positive spiritual quality attributed to fantasy by adults has any effect on children must be considered. It has already been noted that children's responses display awareness of spiritual values and understanding of spiritual concepts like sacrifice and forgiveness, although these values are not always translated into religious terms. Previous discussion has also indicated that this non-translation is not necessarily a sign of non-recognition of spiritual values because the response to the inherent "rightness" of the story has sufficient spiritual worth. These then are immediate responses to stories, but I want to suggest that values expressed in fantasy literature may have more lasting effects

because the imaginative response is non-specific and will therefore not be linked to the story alone. Responses indicate that children are able to relate moral situations in fantasy literature to real life and therefore their understanding of the moral problem is already shown not to be context-dependent, but unfortunately the effects of fantasy literature in the long term will be difficult to assess precisely because of its non-specificity.

What this study has been able to assess is that children do respond imaginatively to fantasy literature. Although research conditions did not permit a controlled comparative study in which the same respondent could answer questions on a non-fantasy as well as a fantasy work, a general tendency on the part of fantasy respondents to react more imaginatively than non-fantasy respondents can be noted as a valid comparative aspect of this study. It has been generally concluded on the basis of children's responses that fantasy literature which contains situations of a moral nature has the potential ability to stimulate moral reasoning. Consideration of the contribution that moral imagination makes to moral development is essential for moral educators, whether they are parents or teachers.

It is assumed that all modern moral educators would disagree with the fairy-tale condemning Mrs Trimmer who posited that "RELIGION and VIRTUE may be as easily taught to children as Chemistry,  
<sup>12</sup>  
 Mechanics, etc." What they do not agree on is how, if at all, to teach moral education. The wider aspects of moral education cannot be covered here, but the specific relevance of literature to moral education will be discussed.

In this study only immediate responses to literature were assessed and it was concluded that fantasy literature stimulated moral thinking beyond the confines of the story. It appears therefore that fantasy literature could provide a valid starting point for discussion on moral issues. Discussion of situations in literature encourages children to give a natural and spontaneous response and they are more likely to contribute honestly to such discussions than if their opinions were asked about an unrelated moral issue where they are conscious of the need to make moral judgements. Obviously not only fantasy literature is suitable for such discussion, but the value of fantasy literature in stimulating the moral imagination should be considered. A story which stimulates moral reasoning in an imaginative way may not necessarily impart the fixed values which are expressed in the story, but because children are given the opportunity to reason about the moral problem they are given practice in moral thinking which leads to moral growth. Children are encouraged to make their own moral decisions as they reason through moral problems and therefore their decisions have greater personal relevance and validity because they are working through their own reasoning process instead of merely accepting the reasoning of others. In this way they are encouraged to work towards their own understanding of Kohlberg's idea of "true knowledge of the good".

The role of moral imagination is important in the development of religious thinking as well. The responses indicate that children are able to respond to "numinous moments" in literature which are sometimes far beyond their cognitive understanding. The nature of religious language is symbolic and therefore religious concepts can often only be intuitively understood, but not cognitively

explained. What L'Engle writes of the fairy world can equally be related to the religious realm: "the world ... where we aren't limited to our intellect at the sacrifice of our intuition."<sup>13</sup> It appears that religious educators should not be bound by the idea that children need to reach a stage of religion readiness before they can understand religion language. Children may well misunderstand some concepts if they are beyond their understanding, but if they are encouraged to practice moral thinking imaginatively they are likely to correct their misunderstandings by their own discoveries. The religious or moral educator can play a creative role in the stimulation of moral reasoning by adopting an advisory rather than condemnatory attitude towards immature reasoning. By suggesting alternative reasoning in a way that allows children to discover a new way of considering an issue, they can encourage children to extend their reasoning instead of merely accepting the "right" way of thinking.

The inclusion of children's responses in this study highlights the fact that adult theorizing can provide valid frameworks for understanding children's moral, religious and literary development, but these theoretical speculations need to be tested against the reality of children's ideas. All too often adult expectations underestimate children's ability.

What is truth? says Pilate  
 Waits for no answer;  
 Double your stakes, says the clock  
 To the ageing dancer;  
 Double the guard, says Authority,  
 Treble the bars;  
 Holes in the sky, says the child  
 Scanning the stars. 14



## NOTES

## Introduction

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## Chapter 1.

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13. Piaget, p. 164.
14. Piaget, pp. 188, 189.
15. Kohlberg, L. The Philosophy of Moral Development (Essays on Moral Development, vol 1). San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981, p. 47.

16. This description was adapted from the appendix to Kohlberg's The Philosophy of Moral Development (pp. 408-412). All unreferenced quotations are taken from these pages.
17. Wright & Croxen, p. 41.
18. Kohlberg, L. Stages of moral development. In Beck, C.M., Crittenden, B.S., Sullivan, E.U., eds. Moral Education: Interdisciplinary Approaches. New York: Newman Press, 1971, pp. 45, 46.
19. Kohlberg, Stages of moral development, p. 50.
20. Piaget, p. 107.
21. Piaget, p. 114.
22. Oddo, pp. 70-76. Oddo gives a brief review of the literature in this article.
23. Kay, p. 179.
24. Wright & Croxen, p. 38.
25. Wright & Croxen, p. 44.
26. Westcott, M.R. Toward a Contemporary Psychology of Intuition: A Historical, Theoretical and Empirical Enquiry. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1968, p. 53.
27. Wright & Croxen, p. 43.
28. Kohlberg, quoted in Kurtines, W., Greif E.B. The development of moral thought: review and evaluation of Kohlberg's approach. Psychological Bulletin 1974. 81:461.
29. Kohlberg, Philosophy of Moral Development, p. 98.
30. Beechick, R. Lawrence Kohlberg: Why Johnny can be good without being religious. Christianity Today 1977. 22:409.
31. Moffett, P.S. The preconventional teen: a study in moral development. Journal of Pastoral Counseling 1981. 16:53-60.
32. Duska, R., Whelan, M. Moral Development: A Guide to Piaget and Kohlberg. Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1977, p. 85.
33. Kurtines & Greif, p. 460.
34. Coles, R. The Moral Life of Children. Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, p. 286n.
35. Coles, pp. 22, 23.

36. Coles, p. 25. "The more I tried to understand the emotional conflicts, the tensions and responses to tensions, the underlying motivations, and the projections and displacements; the more I emphasized the automatic or reflexive behavior of the children we knew, a consequence of their short lives, their lack of education, their limited cognitive development, their inability to handle all sorts of concepts and symbols; the more I read and commented on various developmental points of view, which emphasized stages and phases and periods - and, of course, consigned elementary school children such as Ruby Bridges to the lower rungs of this or that ladder - the more my wife kept pointing to the acts of these boys and girls, the deeds they managed."
37. Coles, p. 24.
38. Kohlberg, Stages of moral development, p. 44.
39. Peck and Havighurst devised a personality typology comprising five personality types. I have not referred to it in detail because in my opinion the developmental nature of their types detracts from their meaningfulness. Their theory is outlined in Kay, pp. 201-207.
40. Hartman, P. A perspective on the study of social attitudes. European Journal of Social Psychology 1977. 7 (1): 88.
41. Cited by Kay, p. 232.
42. Kay, pp. 31, 32.
43. Kohlberg, Philosophy of Moral Development, p. 123.
44. Duska & Whelan, p. 83.
45. Kohlberg, Philosophy of Moral Development, pp. 340-345.
46. Duska & Whelan, p. 85.
47. Moffett, pp. 53-60.
48. Gottlieb, J., Bailey, S. Transpersonal moral reasoning: a proposed measure of motivation underlying religious commitment. Journal of Pastoral Counseling 1981. 16: 39-46.
49. Spidell, S., Liberman, D. Moral development and the forgiveness of sin. Journal of Psychology and Theology 1981. 9: 159-163.
50. Beechick, pp. 408 - 410.
51. Young, R.G. Values differentiation as stage transition: an expansion of Kohlbergian moral stages. Journal of Psychology and Theology 1981. 9: 164-174.
52. Fowler, J.W. Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981.

## Chapter 2

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2. Ziolkowski, p. 20.
3. Ziolkowski, p. 33.
4. Gunn, G. The Interpretation of Otherness: Literature, Religion, and the American Imagination. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979, p. 5.
5. Gunn, p. 6.
6. Abrams, M.H. The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition. New York: Norton, 1958.
7. Gunn, pp. 65-80.
8. Gunn, p. 76.
9. Gunn, p. 80.
10. Van Ghent, D. Quoted by Gunn, p. 83.
11. He refers to a term used by R.H.Pearce. Gunn, p. 84.
12. Gunn, p. 85.
13. Gunn, pp. 85, 86.
14. Gunn, p. 86.
15. Neale, T. Candid Notices, Religious and Moral, Designed to Amuse the Mind and Amend the Heart. Rugeley: Leonard, 1817.
16. Written for children by James Janeway, 1671. Discussed in Avery, G. Childhood's Pattern: A study of the Heroes and Heroines of Children's Fiction 1770-1950. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1975, p. 101.
17. Tucker, N. The Child and the Book: A Psychological and Literary Exploration. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981, p. 67.
18. Zipes, J. Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk and Fairy Tales. London: Heinemann, 1979, p. 15.
19. Mrs Sherwood's The History of the Fairchild Family, Pt 1 1818, Pt 11 1842, Pt 111 1847. Discussed in Darton, F.J.H. Children's Books in England: Five Centuries of Social Life, 3rd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, pp. 169 - 171.

20. Kohlberg's stages of moral development are outlined in Chapter 1 above, pp. 9-12. Future mention of Kohlbergian stages in this chapter will not be referenced separately.
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25. Hunt, p. 60.
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27. Hunt, p. 31.
28. Hunt quotes Paul Hazard, p. 32.
29. Lukens, R.J. A Critical Handbook of Children's Literature. Oxford, Ohio: Scott, Foresman & Co., 1982, p. 108.
31. Egoff, S.A. Thursday's Child: Trends and Patterns in Contemporary Children's Literature. Chicago: American Library Association, 1981, p. 82.
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33. Mobley, J. Toward a definition of fantasy fiction. In Bator, R., ed. Signposts to Criticism of Children's Literature. Chicago: American Library Association, 1983, p. 249.
34. Tolkien, p. 28.
35. Zahorski, K.J., Boyer, R.H. The secondary worlds of high fantasy. In Schlobin, R.C., ed. The Aesthetics of Fantasy Literature and Art. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982, p. 63.
36. Langton, J. The weak place in the cloth: a study of fantasy for children. In Heins, P., ed. Crosscurrents of Criticism. Boston: Horn Book, 1977, p. 185.

37. Hoffeld, L. Where magic begins. The Lion and the Unicorn. 1979. 3(1): 5, 12.
38. Zanger, J. Heroic fantasy and social reality: ex nihilo nihil fit. In Schlobin, R.C., ed. The Aesthetics of Fantasy Literature and Art. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982, p. 227.
39. Egoff, Thursday's Child, p. 80.
40. Lewis, C.S. On three ways of writing for children. In Egoff, S., Stubbs, G.T., Ashley, L.F. Only Connect: Reading on Children's Literature. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 214.
41. Gunn, p. 85.
42. Yep, L. Fantasy and reality. Horn Book Magazine 1978. 54: 139.
43. Marshall, M.R. An Introduction to the World of Children's Books. Aldershot: Gower, 1982, p. 76.
44. Tolkien names Fantasy, Recovery, Escape and Consolation as the essential ingredients of fairy-stories, p. 48ff.
45. Tolkien, p. 63. It should be noted that this quotation is used in the context of Tolkien's opposition to the destruction of nature. The elm tree is therefore a "real" tree (i.e. not an Ent, one of Tolkien's talking trees) but one which is obsolete in the "realists'" view, because it must be cut down to make way for a factory chimney.
46. Zanger, p. 235.
47. Alexander, L. High fantasy and heroic romance. In Heins, P., ed. Crosscurrents of Criticism. Boston: Horn Book, 1977, p. 175.
48. Egoff, Thursday's Child, p. 81.
49. Cooper, S. Escaping into ourselves. In Hearne, B., Kaye, M., eds. Celebrating Children's Books: Essays on Children's Literature in Honor of Zena Sutherland. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1981, p. 16.
50. This idea is linked to Piaget's description of the process of assimilation and a comment by Applebee (p. 7) on a group of girls discussing a story: "In the end, they will have fitted the story into their world view, assimilated it, and come to an understanding of its message. In a very real sense, they will have given it the meaning which it will have for them." Applebee, A.N. The Child's Concept of Story. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978, p. 7.

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59. Quinn, D.B. The Narnia books of C.S. Lewis: fantastic or wonderful? Children's Literature 1984. 12: 119.
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61. Lawhead, S. Quoted by Wroe, M. Christian fantasy literature. Christian Living Today 1985. Nov./Dec.: 18.
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63. Hunt, p. 17.
64. Houghton, J. Quoted by Wroe, p. 18.
65. Timmerman, p. 537.
66. Tolkien, p. 71.
67. Tolkien, p. 68.
68. Dixon, B. Catching Them Young 2: Political Ideas in Children's Fiction. London: Pluto Press, 1977, p. 146.
69. Dixon, p. 149.
70. Zanger, p. 231, 232.
71. Molson, p. 100.
72. Dixon, pp. 148-161.

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78. Thomson, J. Response to reading: the process as described by one fourteen-year-old. English in Education 1979. 13(3): 1-11.
79. Cooper, C.R., ed. Researching Response to Literature and the Teaching of Literature: Points of Departure. Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1985, pp. xi, xii.
80. Cooper, p. xii.
81. Holland, N.N. 5 Readers Reading. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1975, p. 12.
82. Holland, N.N. Reading readers reading. In Cooper, C.R., ed. Researching Response to Literature and the Teaching of Literature: Points of Departure. Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1985, p. 6.
83. Holland, in Cooper, p. 7.
84. Purves, A.C. That sunny dome: those caves of ice. In Cooper, C.R., ed. Researching Response to Literature and the Teaching of Literature: Points of Departure. Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1985, p. 56.
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86. Purves, p. 61.
87. Figure 2 is reproduced from p. 62 of Purves's article.
88. Purves, p. 62.



89. Purves, p. 63.
90. Figure 3 is reproduced from p. 64 of Purves's article.
91. Purves, p. 63.
92. Harding, D.W. Quoted in Thomson, p. 9.

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6. Blyton, E. The forgotten rabbits. In The Adventures of Pink-Whistle, 5th ed. London: George Newnes, 1948. (Abbreviated to FR).
7. Piaget, J. The Moral Judgement of the Child (trans. Gabain, M), 1st ed. 1932. Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1983, pp. 243 - 246.
8. Summerville, G. Fantasy and Reason: Children's Literature in the Eighteenth Century. London: Methuen, 1984, p. xiv.
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12. Cooper, S. Escaping into ourselves. In Hearn, B., Kaye, M., eds. Celebrating Children's Books: Essays on Children's Literature in Honor of Zena Sutherland. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1981, p. 16.
13. Bettelheim, B. The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales. Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1979, p. 15.
14. MacDonald, G. The fantastic imagination (Signal reprints, Salway, L., ed.) Signal 1975. 16: 29.
15. Bettelheim, p. 69.
16. Cited by Von Franz, M.L. Interpretation of Fairy Tales: An Introduction to the Psychology of Fairy Tales. Zurich: Spring Publications, 1973, p. 7.
17. Bettelheim, p. 9.
18. Higgins, J.E. Beyond Words: Mystical Fancy in Children's Literature. New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1971, p. 57.
19. Higgins, pp. 57, 58.
20. Piaget's analysis of types of punishment is discussed in Chapter 1 above, pp. 6, 7. All future terms used in the analyses refer to these pages.
21. Kohlberg's stages of moral development are outlined in Chapter 1 above, pp. 9-12. Future mention of Kohlbergian stages during analysis of the stories will not be referenced separately.
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23. MacDonald, The fantastic imagination, p. 29.
24. Applebee, p. 99.
25. Mobley, J. Toward a definition of fantasy fiction. In Bator, R., ed. Signposts to Criticism of Children's Literature Chicago: American Library Association, 1983, p. 253.
26. Piaget, p. 193.
27. Higgins, p. 10.
28. Auden, W.H. Afterword - George MacDonald. In Meek, M., Warlow, A., Barton, G., eds. The Cool Web: The Pattern of Children's Reading. London: Bodley Head, 1977, p. 105.

29. Piaget, pp. 243-246.
30. Applebee, p. 99.
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33. Kay, W. Moral Development : A Psychological Study of Moral Growth from Childhood to Adolescence. London: Allen & Unwin, 1968, p. 160. The original quotation is: "The right thing to do is to obey the order of an adult. The wrong thing to do is to assert one's own will." This refers to Piaget's authoritarian stage.

#### Chapter 4.

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3. St John, P.M. Rainbow Garden, 1st publ. 1960. London: Scripture Union, 1983. (Abbreviated to RG.)
4. St John, P.M. Star of Light, 1st publ. 1953. London: Scripture Union, 1984. (Abbreviated to SL.)
5. Alcott, L.M. Little Women, 1st publ. 1867. London: Dent & Sons, 1911.
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7. L'Engle, M. A Wrinkle in Time, 1st publ. 1962. Harmondsworth: Penguin (Puffin), 1973. (Abbreviated to WT.)
8. Lewis, C.S. The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, 1st publ. 1950. Harmondsworth: Penguin (Puffin), 1979. (Abbreviated to LWW.)
9. Tolkien, J.R.R. The Hobbit, 1st publ. 1937. London: Allen & Unwin, 1977.
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11. Enright, E. Realism in children's literature. Horn Book Magazine 1967. 43: 167.

12. Janeway, E. Meg, Jo, Beth, Amy and Louisa. In Egoff, S., Stubbs, G.T., Ashley L.F., eds. Only Connect: Readings on Children's Literature. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1969, pp. 287, 288.
13. Bragg, M. Little Women. Children's Literature in Education 1978. 9(2): 97.
14. Brophy, B. A masterpiece, and dreadful. In Haviland, U., ed. Children and Literature: Views and Reviews. London: Bodley Head, 1974, p. 69.
15. Janeway, p. 290.
16. Dedman, S.C. Library Association Conference Proceedings 1949, quoted in Ray, S.G. The Blyton Phenomenon. London: Deutsch, 1982, p. 38.
17. Philip, N. The Child and the Book (Review article). Children's Literature in Education 1981. 12(3): 161.
18. Hildick, W. Children and Fiction. London: Evans Brothers, 1970, p. 88.
19. Tucker, N. Cited in Ray, p. 103.
20. Tucker, N. The Blyton enigma. Children's Literature in Education 1975. 19: 195.
21. Tucker, p. 196.
22. Sarland, C. Piaget, Blyton and story: children's play and the reading process. Children's Literature in Education 1985. 16(2): 107.
23. Sarland, p. 108.
24. Blyton, E. Foreword to A Complete List of Books: Enid Blyton, quoted by Dixon, B. Catching Them Young 2: Political Ideas in Children's Fiction. London: Pluto Press, 1977, p. 57.
25. Blyton's autobiography, quoted by Dixon, pp. 57, 58.
26. Inglis, F. The Promise of Happiness: Value and Meaning in Children's Fiction. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981. p. 190.
27. Inglis, p. 190.
28. Hildick, p. 88.
29. Hildick, p. 89.

30. K. Hume makes an interesting comment on the detective/police relationship in fiction when she points out that readers need not be concerned about failing to outguess detectives like Lord Peter Wimsey because "the similar failure of the police is comforting" and "the more intelligent the police or helpers, the more enjoyable their failure is to readers". Hume, K. Fantasy and Mimesis: Responses to Reality in Western Literature. New York: Methuen, 1984, p. 75.
31. Ray, p. 174.
32. Tucker, N. The Child and the Book: A Psychological and Literary Exploration. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981, p. 108.
33. Wright, P. Five Run Away Together - should we let them back? English in Education 1980. 14(1): 22.
34. Woods, M. Cited by Ray, p. 192.
35. She begins her "Note for the Reader" by asking: "Are you a child? Or are you a grown-up?" (SBB, p. 11)
36. Ray, p. 193.
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38. Barker, K. The use of food in Enid Blyton's fiction. Children's Literature in Education 1982. 13(1): 9.
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40. Philip, N. Fantasy: double cream or instant whip? Signal 1981. 35: 87.
41. Cooper, S. Silver on the Tree. Harmondsworth: Penguin (Puffin), 1981, pp. 282, 283.
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43. Drury, R.W. Realism plus fantasy equals magic. Horn Book Magazine 1972. 48: 117.
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45. Cited in Thomson, p. 9.

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48. Dixon, p. 151.
49. Dixon, p. 155.
50. L'Engle points out that fantasy or science fiction contain not only violence, but also involve risk because risk is involved in every choice and "without risk there is no story." L'Engle, M. Childlike wonder and the truths of science fiction. Children's Literature 1982. 10: 106.
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53. Hooper, W. Narnia, the author, the critics, and the tale. Children's Literature 1974. 3: 15.
54. Sale, R. Fairy Tales and After ... From Snow White to E.B. White. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978, p. 25.
55. Stibbs, A. Honour be blowed. English in Education 1980. 14(3): 27.
56. Poskanzer, S.C. Thoughts on C.S. Lewis and the Chronicles of Narnia. Language Arts 1976. 53(5): 525.
57. Brady, C.A. Finding God in Narnia. In White, M.L., ed. Children's Literature: Criticism and Response. Columbus, Ohio: Merrill, 1976, p. 128.
58. Lochhead, M. The Renaissance of Wonder in Children's Literature. Edinburgh: Canongate, 1977, p. 83.
59. Holbrook, D. The problem of C.S. Lewis. Children's Literature in Education 1973. 10: 3-25.
60. Hooper, p. 13.
61. Gough, J. C.S. Lewis and the problem of David Holbrook. Children's Literature in Education 1977. 8(2): 51-62.

62. Gough, p. 51.
63. Gough, p. 55.
64. Smith, L. News from Narnia. In Egoff, S., Stubbs G.T., Ashley, L.F., eds. Only Connect: Readings on Children's Literature. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 175.
65. Wroe, M. Christian fantasy literature. Christian Living Today 1985. Nov./Dec.: 19.
66. Lochhead, p. 5.
67. Inglis, p. 192.
68. This essay is discussed in Chapter 2.
69. J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Madeleine L'Engle, Ursula Le Guin, Richard Adams and Alan Garner. Dixon, p. 146.
70. Dixon, p. 147.
71. Dixon, p. 148.
72. Stibbs, A. For realism in children's fiction. The Use of English 1980. 32(1): 18.
73. Yates, J. In defence of fantasy. (Correspondence) The Use of English 1981. 32(3): 72.
74. Timmerman, J.H. Fantasy literature's evocative power. The Christian Century 1978. 95:535.
75. Timmerman, p. 536.
76. Lochhead, p. 114.
77. Richardson, C. The reality of fantasy. Language Arts 1976. 53(5): 550.
78. Helms, R. Myth, Magic and Meaning in Tolkien's World. London: Granada (Panther), 1978, p.54.
79. Nitzsche, J.C. Tolkien's Art: A Mythology for England. London: Macmillan, 1980, pp. 44, 45.
80. Ryan, J.S. Tolkien: Cult or Culture? Armidale, New South Wales: University of New England, 1969, p. 146.

#### Chapter 5.

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2. Holbrook, p. 11.
3. Holbrook, p. 11.
4. She discusses not only the psychopomps in A Wrinkle in Time but also those in the two sequels. Patterson, N. Angel and psychopomp in Madeleine L'Engel's "Wind Trilogy." Children's Literature in Education 1983. 14: 195-203.
5. Patterson, p. 202.
6. Stibbs, A. Honour be blowed. English in Education 1980. 14(3): 27.
7. Study conducted by Jackson, cited in Zimet, S. Print and Prejudice. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1980, pp. 19, 20.
8. Study conducted by Lancaster, cited in Glazer, J.I., Williams, G. Introduction to Children's Literature. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979, p. 343.
9. Stibbs, p. 27.
10. Dixon, B. Catching Them Young 2: Political Ideas in Children's Fiction. London: Pluto Press, 1977. Dixon provides a list of "prejudice-free" books, pp. 167-171.
11. Wright, P. Five Run Away Together - should we let them back? English in Education 1980; 14(1): 22.
12. Summerfield, G. Fantasy and Reason: Children's Literature in the Eighteenth Century. London: Methuen, 1984, p. 195.
13. L'Engle, M. What is Real? Language Arts 1978. 55(4): 448.
14. MacNeice, L. What is truth? Collected Poems 1925-1948. London: Faber & Faber, 1949, p. 237.



## QUESTIONNAIRE

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. Name .....
2. Age ... yrs .... months
3. School .....
4. Girl or boy .....
5. Name of book .....
- 6.a. Did you enjoy reading this book? ..... 6.b. Would you like to reread it at a later stage?
7. Why did you enjoy or not enjoy reading it?
8. Was there a section that you particularly liked? Describe it briefly and say why you felt that way.
9. Was there a section that you particularly disliked? Describe it briefly and say why you felt that way.
10. Which characters did you like the most? List the first three in order and say why you liked them.
11. Which characters did you like the least? List the first three in order and say why you disliked them.
12. Do you think this book has helped you to understand yourself or other people better? Explain how.
13. Write down five books that you have enjoyed reading.
14. Write down five books that you have not enjoyed reading.

LITTLE WOMEN

## CHAPTER 8

When Jo and Laurie go skating, Jo is still angry with Amy and so she doesn't warn her about the dangerous ice and Amy falls in.

1. How does Jo feel after the incident?
2. What do you think about the way Jo behaved?
3. How do you think you would have behaved if you were Jo?
4. What do you think about the way Amy behaved?
5. How do you think you would have behaved if you were Amy?
6. What do you think of Jo's mother's advice on how Jo should curb her temper?

THE MYSTERY OF THE DISAPPEARING CAT

At the end of the book when the children explain to Inspector Jenks how they managed to solve the mystery, Mr Goon is not very pleased.

1. Why do you think Mr Goon isn't pleased?
2. Is Mr Goon a good person? Say why you think this.
3. How do the children behave towards him?
4. How do you think you would behave towards him if you were one of the children?
5. How do you think you would behave if you were Mr Goon?

THE SIX BAD BOYS

## CHAPTERS 15 AND 16

Patrick claimed that he was going to get back a sixpence that the newsagent had short-changed him, but he helped himself to more.

1. If he had taken only his sixpence, would he still have been stealing? Why do you think so?
2. Bob was planning to return his share of the money, but decided to use it to buy presents for Pat. Was this a good reason for keeping the money? Say why you think so.

When Tom found the wallet containing twelve pounds Fred said, "Finding's keeping," and so they shared out the money.

3. What would you have done if you were Tom? Why?
4. What would you have done if you were Fred? Why?
5. Why do you think the boys behaved the way they did?

THE DARK IS RISING

1. What do you think you would have found to be the most difficult thing you had to do if you were Will? Why?

In the chapter "Betrayal" in Part II, Hawkin decides to join the Dark because he feels that Merriman has treated him badly.

2. How do you think you would feel if you were Hawkin?
3. What do you think you would have done if Maggie Barnes had approached you?
4. How do you think you would feel if you were Merriman?

A WRINKLE IN TIME

## CHAPTER 12

1. When Meg realizes that she has to go to rescue Charles Wallace she is upset at first, but then she agrees to go. What do you think made her change her mind?
2. What do you think Mrs Who's gift to Meg meant?
3. How did Meg manage to rescue Charles Wallace?
4. How do you think you would have felt if you were Meg?
5. How do you think you would have acted if you were IT?

THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE

## CHAPTERS 14 &amp; 15

1. Why do you think Aslan agreed to go to the witch to be killed?
2. How did the people watching the killing behave?
3. What do you think you would have done if you had been watching the killing? Explain why.
3. After the battle Lucy asked Susan whether she thought Edmund knew what Aslan had done for him, but she didn't know. Do you think that he knew? How do you think he would have felt if he had known? Why?

RAINBOW GARDEN

## CHAPTER 8

1. What were Elaine's reasons for taking the shell? Were they good reasons? Say why you think so.

## CHAPTER 14

When Elaine remembers that she has promised to go to tea with Philippa, she turns back even though she would have liked to go to the river with the others.

2. What do you think made her turn back?
3. What do you think would have happened if she hadn't turned back?

## CHAPTER 20

4. What kind of person do you think the tramp who found Elaine was?



STAR OF LIGHT

## CHAPTER 5

1. When Kinza's mother decides to send her away with Hamid so that she won't be sold to the beggar, why does she want to send her to the English nurse?

## CHAPTER 17

2. Why did Hamid change his mind about telling Rosemary about his step-father?
3. What made Hamid decide to go with Rosemary to show her where his family lived?
4. Rosemary told Jenny that she was being selfish by being bad-tempered and feeling sorry for herself all day. What do you think of her behaviour? How do you think you would have behaved if you were Jenny?

THE HOBBIT

## CHAPTER 13

When Bilbo is checking to see if Smaug is there, he sees the Arkenstone and puts it in his pocket.

1. Do you think Bilbo was right to take the stone?
2. Do you think you would have taken the stone if you were Bilbo? Why?

## CHAPTER 15

After Smaug had been killed the Elvenking and Bard felt that they had a right to some of the treasure, but Thorin disagreed.

3. What would you have done if you were Thorin?

## CHAPTER 16

4. When Bilbo decides to stop the siege by giving Bard the Arkenstone, Thorin feels that Bilbo has betrayed him. What do you think? Say why you think this.
5. Why do you think the dwarves joined the men and elves against the goblins?

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